FAMILIAR WILD BIRDS

4 Vols of Birds, a

The Fieldfare.

FIELDFARE.

(⅓ Scale.)

FAMILIAR WILD BIRDS.

BY

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Third Series

(*WITH COLOURED PLATES*)

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PREFACE.

This third volume, treating of the habits and appearance of our Familiar Wild Birds, is prepared on the same lines as its predecessors, which have met with such a wide-spread welcome from the public. It is, unhappily, necessary to remark that, as these popular chapters go further through the list of British birds, they now come from time to time upon birds which, once "familiar" enough, are fast becoming no longer so. A few in these volumes are now nearly on the verge of extinction; but as their names are almost household words amongst the population of one part or the other of these islands, it has seemed all the more desirable on that account to place faithful descriptions and portraits before the reader.

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FAMILIAR WILD BIRDS.

THE FIELDFARE.

Turdus pilaris.

SO suggestive of hard weather and the earlier expeditions of the amateur gunner is the appearance in our fields of the Fieldfare that, as a writer remarks, the very mention of its name conjures up reminiscences of "frost in the air, and snow upon the ground." And there are but few persons who have ever been fond of the gun who cannot recall their experience in connection with this bird, especially in the days when want of opportunity and means forbade the pursuit of nobler game.

The Fieldfare arrives in this country later than any other of our winter visitors, usually about the middle of October or the beginning of November. It is found in all parts of England, Scotland, Ireland,

and Wales, and generally arrives on our shores with an easterly or north-easterly wind.

In Poland, Prussia, and Austria the Fieldfare is said to remain throughout the entire year. In France, Switzerland, and the south of Europe, the bird is purely a winter visitor. The flocks remain in our country until the end of April, although they are occasionally found so late as May.

The Fieldfare is gregarious in its habits; it generally associates in parties of some one or two score, and several of these parties may commonly be found sufficiently near each other as to merit the description of a large flock. Sometimes they assemble in very large numbers indeed, and now and then an isolated bird or two may be seen feeding with other members of the thrush tribe.

These birds are naturally of a wary, cautious disposition, generally frequenting the cultivated districts, and usually feeding in some open place, where an unobserved approach is extremely difficult. As the cold increases in severity they become much tamer, and visit gardens and lawns in search of food.

The food of the Fieldfare consists of various substances, chief amongst which may be enumerated small snails, beetles, grubs, worms, seeds, and such berries as those of the mountain ash, hawthorn, holly, and ivy. The flight is not very rapid, and consists of a series of gentle undulations, the wings being rapidly flapped about a dozen times, and then rested. The birds usually wheel round in the air for a little time before coming to the ground, uttering a harsh cry whilst so doing. When the bird settles on the ground, its movements are extremely characteristic: the tail is a little depressed, the wings droop a little, and the

head is held well up; then the bird gives a short series of rapid hops, picks up a seed or grub, pauses for a moment, and then hops on rapidly again.

When feeding in this way, the birds always move in one direction, not running about promiscuously, as is commonly the case; and when one or two of the party may have fallen a little in the rear, they take a short flight, and rejoin the main body of their comrades. When alarmed, they do not instantly rise, but remain motionless for an instant, then uttering a screaming note, like the words "chack, chack, chack," they all take refuge in flight, or seek the shelter of some tall trees that may be conveniently near.

The song of the Fieldfare is heard as early as the commencement of March. It is soft and pleasing, and, in addition to this song, they often indulge in a harsh, unmusical chatter.

In nesting operations the Fieldfare is a sociable bird, building in colonies, and, according to some authorities, "as many as two hundred nests have been found within a small circuit of the forest." As in the case of rooks and some other birds, they return season after season to breed in the same locality.

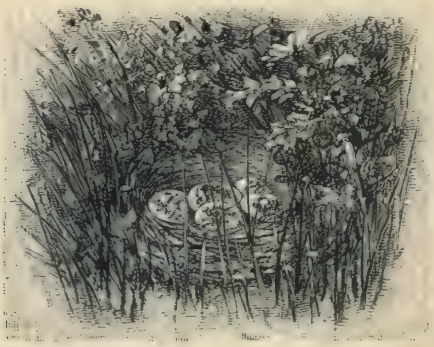
The nest is built of dried grass, twigs, and sticks, cemented with clay, and lined with fine fibres and grass, and generally in pine or fir trees at various heights from the ground. The eggs vary in number from three to six, and are of a pale bluish-green colour, with spots of dark reddish-brown.

The plumage of the Fieldfare is handsome and well marked. The iris is dark brown; the bill is orange inside, with bristles at the base, and dark brown at the tip; be-

tween the bill and the eye there is a black mark, which passes under it, and a dark line passes backwards in the shape of a semicircle. Over the eye is a streak of grey or buff. The crown is ash grey, the feathers having a dusky streak in the centre; front and sides of neck are light yellowish-red, with triangular marks of brownish-black; chin and throat pale yellowish-orange, streaked with black; breast is light yellowish-red, spotted with triangular marks of blackish-brown; the sides are paler and the spots are larger. The back on the upper part is a dark chestnut, shaded in the lower portion into bluish-grey, which is very conspicuous in flight. The wings are brownish, and the under coverts are white. Tail is a deep greyish-black, long, and the feathers even; upper tail-coverts ash grey; under tail-coverts white; legs and toes dusky brown; claws blackish-brown.

The female resembles the male.

The bird is variously known as the Fieldfare, Feet Feltfare, Blue-back, Blue-tail, and Blue-felt.



The Ptarmigan.

PTARMIGAN.
(¼ Scale.)

THE PTARMIGAN.

Tetras lagopus.
Lagopus vulgaris.

PERHAPS the most remarkable, this interesting bird is also the smallest of the British grouse. It belongs to rather a large sub-family, that of the Tetraonidæ, whose distinguishing characteristic is a naked band, frequently of a red colour, in the place of an eyebrow.

The Ptarmigan may be cited as a forcible example of the marvellous way in which Nature provides for the security and protection of her dependents. In the summer the bird's plumage is of a grey and mottled appearance, and is closely assimilated to the bleak rocks and

herbage amongst which it lives; but in winter, as soon as the ground is covered with snow, nearly the whole of the bird becomes white, and so exactly resembles the frozen ground that the keenest eyes and greatest experience are frequently at a loss to detect its presence.

The marvellous resemblance here spoken of may be indeed considered almost the only defence against aggression which the bird possesses, as it exhibits none of the caution and wariness shown by other members of the Grouse family. Pennant even says that the Ptarmigan is "a very silly bird, so tame as to bear driving like poultry."

In Great Britain the Ptarmigan is only found on the highest ranges of hills, in North and Central Scotland, and in the Hebrides and Orkneys; but it is a resident in most of the high mountainous districts of Northern Europe. It is also to be met with in Savoy, Switzerland, and Spain.

It never leaves the neighbourhood of these bleak localities, although in unusually severe weather the birds may venture somewhat lower, and take temporary refuge in the clefts and ravines of some lonely and sheltered glen. This is, however, an exceptional occurrence, for severe weather seems to affect Ptarmigans in so very slight a degree, that they may be seen sitting and pluming themselves in the snow, quite indifferent to the sleet or blast that surrounds them.

When disturbed, the Ptarmigan squats on the ground and remains motionless, but if too closely approached, it rises with a hoarse call, somewhat resembling a croak, and being joined by its companions, the entire company fly away in a loose irregular body, usually to some neighbouring eminence.

Like the partridge and many other birds, it feigns

disablement when its young are in danger, but the latter very quickly learn to conceal themselves among the grey rocks and stones, which so closely resemble the colour of their feathers.

The Ptarmigan pairs early in the spring, and the eggs are laid in June and hatched in about three weeks. The male takes no part in the rearing of the brood, but the female evinces the greatest attachment for her young. The nest is composed of a small quantity of heather or grass, placed in a hollow or on the bare ground. The eggs vary in number from seven to twelve, and are of a yellowish-white, sparingly blotched with dark brown; they are about one inch and a-half in length and of an oval shape. The male leaves his mate after the young are hatched, and rejoins his family at a subsequent period, when a number of other families congregate and remain together.

The food of the Ptarmigan is for the greatest part Alpine berries, seeds, and the tender shoots of plants and heather, but the young are largely fed upon insects.

The note of this bird varies considerably, sometimes being quite low, and not dissimilar to that of the Missel Thrush, whilst at other times it is loud, prolonged, and hoarse; the call is heard both in flight and when the bird is on the ground.

In winter the male Ptarmigan has the beak, the lore, and a small angular patch behind the eye black; the irides yellowish-brown; over the eye is a naked red skin. Almost all the plumage is pure white; the four upper tail feathers white, the others black, tipped with white; the legs and toes (which are thickly feathered, excepting the soles) are white, and the claws black.

From May to November the throat is white, but

the neck is mottled with blackish and speckled grey feathers, a few being marked with bars of black and yellow ; the breast, back, and upper tail-feathers speckled grey, the under ones black ; the wings, under surface of the body, and legs white. The length of the male is about fifteen inches. The female is smaller, and, like the male, is white in winter, but lacks the black feathers before and behind the eye. By the end of April the female has assumed as much mixture of feather barred with black and yellow as the male has of grey. The length of the female is fourteen and a-half inches. The young birds when first hatched are covered with down of a light yellow colour, and when fledged are very similar in appearance to the young of the Red Grouse. Like the adult birds, however, they assume the white plumage in winter.

The Curlew.

CURLEW.

(¼ Scale.)

THE CURLEW.

Numenius arquatus.—PENNANT.
Scolopax arquata.

RATHER a singular-looking bird is the Curlew, or, as it is commonly called in Scotland, the Whaup, or Whaap; being possessed of very long legs and an unusually long curved bill. It belongs to the Grallatorial, or Wading family, and is well known on nearly every part of the British coasts. Its favourite resorts are the seashore, where the ebb-tide uncovers large surfaces of sandy flats, and it is also frequently seen on the muddy banks of tidal rivers. When feeding on the seashore, the Curlew feeds upon small crustacea, marine insects, and the worms that abound in such places; but as soon as the flat portions of the shore are covered by the advancing tide, the birds immediately change their feeding places for the

fields and open country that may be found in the immediate vicinity. When any large area is gradually submerged by the advancing waters, the Curlews move a little more inland, and recommence feeding until again forced by the tide to make a further retreat, and this process is repeated until their feeding place is entirely covered.

When flying to their customary resorts, these birds generally proceed in a direct line, and often in the shape of a wedge. Should the first flock be alarmed at any noise or unusual occurrence, a loud cry is uttered by the whole party simultaneously, and the cry is taken up by any flocks that may be succeeding, and the direction is immediately changed.

The young birds are in some parts of the country shot for the table, but the flavour is inferior; they are by no means easy to approach closely, being cautious and wary in the extreme, but they can be allured by imitating their whistling cry. One of the notes of the bird sounds something like "Corloo," and the name "Curlew" has no doubt been bestowed on it in consequence. The whistling of the bird is very shrill, and can be heard at a great distance: indeed, this peculiarity has not escaped the notice of our poets. Sir Walter Scott, for instance, in "The Lady of the Lake," writes: "Wild as the scream of the Curlew"; and other authors have occasionally alluded to it.

The Curlew commences nesting about the beginning of April; at this season of the year it leaves the sea-coast for its various breeding grounds. Curlews breed in some of the large bogs of Ireland, in Sutherland, Northumberland, in Shropshire, on the higher grounds of Cornwall, and also on Dartmoor and Exmoor. They also commonly visit

Orkney, Shetland, and probably most of the Scottish isles, for the purpose of nesting and rearing their young.

The Curlew does not bestow very much care or trouble in the construction of its nest, contenting itself with a few dried leaves or grass hastily laid together, and generally placing it amongst long grass or rushes. Open spaces, where heath is found, or marshy districts are its favourite localities.

Four eggs are usually laid; they are two-and-a-half inches in length, of an olive-green colour, blotched and spotted with dark green and brown. A peculiarity in connection with the eggs may be mentioned, viz., that they are shaped very much like a pear, and are always arranged in the nest with the small ends pointing to each other.

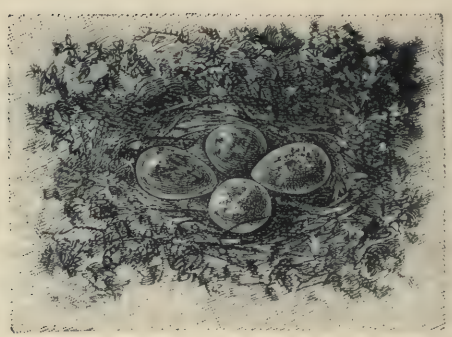
The young birds do not appear to be able to fly for some long time after they are hatched, although they use their legs almost at once; but on the approach of danger they immediately squat and remain motionless until the danger has passed.

The Curlew swims easily, but seldom takes to the water unless under compulsion or when wounded.

The plumage is very similar in both sexes, but in point of size the female has the advantage, the disparity in some cases being very noticeable.

The head of the Curlew is dark brown, lighter towards the base of the bill, which is brown, and measures seven-and-a-half inches from its extremity to the eye; the legs and toes are pale bluish-grey, vent and lower tail-coverts white; breast nearly white, and spotted with dark brown; upper part of breast pale brown, with streaks of darker brown; chin white; the irides are dark brown; head and

neck pale brown; upper part of back brownish-black, the feathers having pale brown edges; the lower part of back, the rump, and upper tail-coverts are white; the tail is barred with dark brown and dull white; the smaller wing-coverts are blackish-brown, with white edges; the greater wing-coverts and primary quill feathers are black, the remaining portion of the wing blackish-brown, and barred on the edges with light and dark brown.



The Great Pit.

GREAT TIT.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE GREAT TIT.

Parus major.

LARGEST of its tribe, this bird is both handsome and interesting. Though much more common than is supposed, since it generally frequents wooded districts, it is very apt to escape the eyes of casual observers. When seen, however, its very handsome appearance and sprightly habits at once attract attention. The plumage of the adult male especially is very striking, the top of the head being purple-black, the cheeks and ear-coverts white, the back, shoulders, and most of the upper part greenish ash-colour, the wings bluish-black edged with white, especially the lesser wing-coverts, which latter form a bar; the tail is also bluish-black; the chin and throat are black, which colour unites with that upon the back of the head,

and runs down the chest along the breast-bone to the under parts; on either side the breast and flanks are dull sulphur-yellow. The female is not so handsome, and the bluish tint upon the head is not so bright, which also applies to general plumage.

This species has an intermediate beak between the finches and warblers, being strong, short, sharp-pointed, and hard. They are therefore able to feed very variously, although they are more truly insectivorous, and may be seen searching the leaves of trees in quest of insects or their eggs, and will run up and along branches, capturing those insects that have taken refuge in the bark. In their search they are most indefatigable, hanging to the leaves and branches, calling to one another meanwhile; for although not extremely gregarious, they generally feed in parties of seven or eight, and will often visit hedgerows and gardens, orchards and thickets. In winter, too, they visit towns, and may then be often heard uttering their querulous little call. These birds, however, do not disdain to feed upon all kinds of grain, and will even steal the Indian corn thrown down in the woods by the gamekeepers for pheasants; they are also very fond of sunflower seeds, and may often be seen in town gardens feeding off them. They hold their food in their feet, and break it up by repeated blows of their hard, sharp beak. Some have been observed to visit beehives, and tap at the hive until a bee comes out and is captured; the bird then flies off, possibly for fear of the indignation of the rest of the hive, to some neighbouring tree or shrub, where it may be seen quietly eating it whilst holding the carcase in the claw. This manœuvre will be repeated many times, to the dismay of the owners.

The bird is also known as the Titmouse, and again as the Oxeye, and generally builds its nest in a hole in the stump of a tree or wall, although very erratic in its choice, instances having occurred of their building in a water-can or some such receptacle that is capable of being removed. The nest, which is built somewhat early in spring, is formed of moss, lined with hair and feathers, and, in the case of a large cavity being selected, a great mass of materials are gathered together. The eggs vary greatly in number, usually from six to nine; they are white in colour, but are largely spotted and speckled with pale red. As there is generally a large nest of young, extra food must necessarily be found by the parent birds, and since this consists mostly of insects, the Great Tit, at such times especially, is of great service to the gardener and farmer. The plumage of the young is somewhat similar to that of the parents, but duller in colour.

The flight is much stronger than would be imagined, although they seldom put it to the test, being bold birds, and, if disturbed, generally contenting themselves with flying from tree to tree. That is also their usual mode of progression, each tree being in their course diligently searched for insects, &c.

The song of the Great Tit is not unlike that of the Wryneck, but is most nearly represented by the phrase "pinker, pinker," several times repeated in a clear, pealing tone. This song is uttered again and again as the bird proceeds from tree to tree, and is repeated by its comrades in answer. They may be heard very early in the spring, long before the leaves are upon the trees.

As before mentioned, this bird is common in almost all the wooded and inclosed districts of England and Wales,

as also Ireland and Scotland. The whole of Europe is its habitat, and it will even be found in the extreme North.

The Great Tit is very fond of fat or suet, and ingenious people may often derive considerable amusement by hanging some to the bough of a tree, especially in winter, when the birds frequent towns; for the Tits will clutch the suet with their feet, and, if given string enough, will swing around after the manner of a roasting-jack. These visits will be repeated day after day, becoming in time a regular institution.

If required for the aviary it is much better to get the birds from the nest and rear them by hand, as they may then become more sociable; but if taken when adult they are very often apt to become dangerous, and will even attack birds much larger than themselves, and, by repeated blows of their sharp little beaks, break open their victims' heads and eat their brains. If, however, a separate cage or, better still, a small aviary be available, Titmice will amply repay the trouble of keeping, being very handsome, and especially lively and interesting.

The Herring Gull.

HERRING GULL.

(¼ Scale.)

THE HERRING GULL.

Larus fuscus.
Larus argentatus.

THERE are few, if any, British sea-going birds more familiar to the dwellers on our southern shores than the Herring Gull. It remains with us throughout the entire year, builds its nests and rears its young upon our coasts, and may, in short, be fairly considered as part and parcel of our marine surroundings.

The Herring Gull is a bird of distinctly sociable habits, and may commonly be noticed in the company of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, with whom it feeds constantly, and chooses the same localities in which to breed.

In addition to the southern coasts of Great Britain, this bird is very numerous on the most rocky portions of the Irish shores, and in the Isles

of Orkney and Shetland. Travellers have met with it in the colder climates of Iceland, Greenland, Scandinavia, and Melville Island; and it is said to be well known in many European countries, especially in some of those bounded by the Mediterranean Sea. Yarrell says: "These birds are very numerous in the Golden Horn at Constantinople, and so tame that they will approach close enough to be struck with an oar." It is plentiful in North America.

The Herring Gull derives its name from its partiality to fish as an article of diet; it prefers this sort of food to any other, and preys indiscriminately upon all and sundry that may approach the surface. During the fishing seasons these birds approach the nets with great confidence, and may be seen swimming and flying over the finny captives in great numbers. At such times they betray no more fear of the fishermen than so many ducks or chickens. They possess ravenous appetites, and their stomachic capacities seem quite as well developed as their appetites. The numbers of fish destroyed by these birds at such times must be well-nigh incredible. They often follow pleasure boats round the coast, feeding on any scrap of offal, or anything else that is thrown overboard.

Naturally these Gulls are of shy habits, like others of their tribe. But in protected places they soon become very familiar.

The nest is made of grass, and generally placed on the flat ledges of cliffs, or any suitable spot of a similar character near the summit. Three eggs are laid; they measure about two and a half inches in length, and are nearly one inch and three-quarters in diameter. The grounding is a pale olive brown, spotted and blotched with different sizes of dark brown.

During incubation the birds are bold and daring, and when approached closely make a loud and continuous clamouring, and rise to a great height in the air, wheeling round and round.

Herring Gulls are easily tamed, and have been known to breed in captivity. They are also very useful in a garden, as they will support themselves almost entirely on slugs and worms; they have been known to live thus many years in confinement.

Like the other members of the family, they are indefatigable swimmers, and the flight is buoyant and easy, though somewhat slow, the long wings beating to and fro somewhat in the same manner as those of the Heron.

They frequently leave the coast and wander inland. They may be seen on damp marshy land, grass fields, and arable lands freshly ploughed; here they search for worms, grubs, insects, and, in fact, anything that may turn up. At these times they do a great deal of good.

In summer, the adult bird has the bill yellow, the corner of the under mandible being red; the irides straw coloured; head and neck pure white; the back and all the wing-coverts are a delicate French grey; tertials tipped with white; primaries mostly black, but grey towards the centre; the first primary has a triangular patch of white at the end, and the second and third are also marked with smaller patches of white; the upper tail-coverts and all the tail feathers are pure white; the chin, throat, breast, and all the under portion of the plumage is likewise white; the legs and feet are flesh colour. In winter, the adult birds have the head marked with streaks of dusky grey. The entire length of the bird is about twenty-four inches, and

the wing extends from sixteen to seventeen inches. The adult plumage is not attained until the bird is at least two years old. The young until after the first moult are of a mottled dirty greyish-brown colour, lighter underneath. There is a strong resemblance between the young of this species and the young of the Lesser Black-backed Gull, but the latter is of a darker shade—when first hatched the young birds are covered with soft down, and have a very pretty appearance.

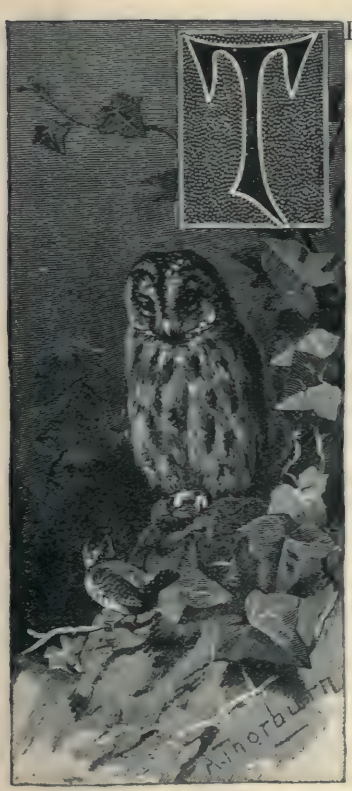
The Tawney Coal.

TAWNY OWL.
(¼ Scale.)

X

THE TAWNY OWL.

Strix stridula.



THE Tawny or Brown Owl, although one of the commonest members of the Owl family, is nevertheless an individual which, from its love of seclusion and nocturnal habits, affords the general public but few opportunities of cultivating its acquaintance.

Thickly-grown woods, dense plantations, and large shrubberies are the localities in which the bird hides during daylight, and it ventures forth into the open wood only when the shades of twilight are deepening into night. At this time of the day the Tawny Owl, impelled by hunger or the necessities of a young family, quits its retreat, and commences a slow but exhaustive search for food.

Young rabbits, rats, mice, moles, small birds, and the larger sorts of night insects, and even fish, are indiscriminately captured, and either devoured on the spot or taken home to the family larder. On these expeditions, which are usually tolerably methodical in their order, fields, farmsteads, low hedges, the outskirts of woods, plantations, and similar places, are carefully scrutinised, and the bird or quadruped must indeed be motionless and diminutive that escapes the searching gaze of this wanderer of the night.

The Tawny Owl does not chase its prey after the manner of the hawk or falcon, but seizes it suddenly and unawares. The flight is somewhat slow and heavy, and, owing to the soft, downy character of the plumage, is perfectly silent; the bird is thus enabled to approach and secure its victim with ease and certainty.

A hole in a tree is the spot most commonly selected as a nesting place. No great care or attention is devoted to the nest itself, which consists of a few pieces of moss, straw, hay, and soft feathers. Nesting usually commences in March, and the young owls are hatched in the following month. Two, three, four, and sometimes five eggs are laid; they are nearly two inches in length, and about one inch and three-quarters in breadth, and nearly round; the surface is rather rough, and the colour a dull white.

The young birds are very odd-looking customers at first, being entirely covered with a soft white down, which becomes grey, and their powers of vision are extremely defective; indeed, for the first few days it is probable that they are quite blind. They remain a considerable time in the nest, and, after leaving it, perch about among the adjacent branches, where they are assiduously attended to by their

parents. When taken into confinement at this time of their lives they may easily be reared, and soon become tame and familiar. The young birds vary considerably in size, owing to the fact that the eggs are laid at intervals of three or four days between each.

The note of the Tawny Owl is aptly described as a "loud and melancholy hoot." It is heard most frequently in the evening and the earlier hours of the night.

In plumage these birds show considerable variation, the ground colour in some specimens being a very dark tawny or brown, and in others approaching almost to grey. The length of the male bird is about fifteen inches; the bill is pale horn colour, much hidden by bristles; cere flesh colour; iris very dark brown; two irregular whitish stripes extend backwards over the eye, and the facial disk is well marked. Head large; crown dark brown and grey, tinged with rufous; the bristly feathers of the face are greyish-white, interspersed with black near the bill, and the small rounded feathers of the wreath are black in the centre, edged, spotted, and barred with white and rufous; neck dingy white, with rufous brown streaks and spots; nape and back dark brown, with markings of brownish-grey and brown; chin brownish-grey; throat and breast same as the neck. The wings have an expansion of nearly three feet, are a mixture of ash grey, mottled with shaded brown; there is a descending line of white spots at the edge of the scapulars, and another on the edge of the wing-coverts. The upper portion of the tail is barred with brown, and the under part greyish-white, with bars of reddish-brown. Lower portions of the body greyish-white, with streaks and spots of pale and dark brown; under tail-coverts white. Legs and toes covered with short greyish-white feathers;

claws long, curved, and very sharp, horn-white at the base, and darker towards the tip.

The females are larger than the males, and, like them, differ very much in their general appearance.

The Tawny Owl is found in almost all the English counties, but is rarer in Scotland; it is said to be found in Scandinavia, Lapland, Russia, and the wooded countries of Europe.

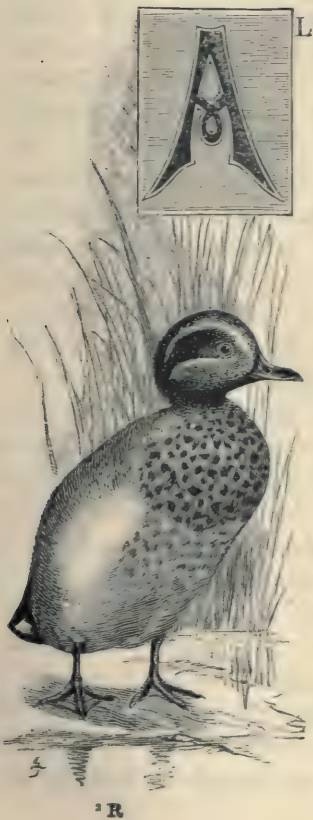
The End.

TEAL.

(¾ Scale.)

THE TEAL.

Anas crecca.
Querquedula crecca.



ALTHOUGH the smallest of the true Duck tribe, this bird is very handsome, and very good eating withal.

In size it is from about fourteen to fifteen inches in length. The head and neck are chesnut, except that a very narrow band of light buff, starting at the base of the beak, extends over the eye to the back of the head; another band branches off from the front of the eye, and passing under, loses itself at the ear coverts. Between these two bands from around the eye, and extending towards the back of the head, is a broader band of glossy bluish-green, which reaches a short way down the back of the neck. The chin is black, the breast yellowish-white,

spotted with black and tinged with purple, the under part shading to dusky white, and barred—or rather, waved—with zigzag black and white lines; the back is also so barred, with a ground colour of pale grey, shaded with dark brown towards the tail. The wings are dark brown, very prettily barred with glossy green, white, and rufous brown. The tail is pale dusky brown, edged with white, except two middle feathers, which are grey, edged with buff. The female is not so handsome as the male, a brown patch taking the place of the green streak running from the eye to the back of the head. The green spangle upon the wing is also darker, being more deeply tinged with purple.

When the young are first hatched they are covered with a dark-coloured down; but in about two months they become like the female, the males not attaining their full plumage until the middle of the succeeding winter.

About the end of July or beginning of August the adult male assumes the duller plumage of the female.

This bird, which has been aptly termed the "little Wild Duck," may be found pretty generally throughout Europe, especially in Norway and Sweden, these latter countries being their most popular breeding-places. They are, however, plentiful in England, more especially in the winter months, when a considerable migration takes place from the Continent.

There are some, however, that breed in England, especially in low marshy districts, as they are more fond of inland waters than the sea-side. They may generally be found frequenting the edges of rivers, ponds, pools, lakes, or such-like pieces of water; also in marshy grounds, and

even small streams and ditches, more especially if they find there the protection of flags and rushes.

Their food consists of grain generally, especially barley and oats, which is first moistened before swallowing; they also feed upon duckweed and such-like plants, as well as grass, seeds, and water-insects.

The nest is usually built by the side of an inland lake, but may also be found in many other places, and even sometimes placed in clefts of rock or in stony places by the sea-shore. This nest is generally built of vegetable substances, such as heath and grasses, and is placed amongst the rushes that grow in moist and boggy localities. They line this structure thickly with down and feathers. The nest is large.

The eggs vary in number, but are generally about eleven, though they range from eight to fifteen. They are dirty-white, tinged with buff.

Teal are somewhat gregarious, although the males generally form small parties towards the close of autumn, before the young have left the females. They also generally travel in flocks, and, like all ducks, with their heads stretched out, and generally ranged in a triangle; their flight is strong and straight, and in the daytime is sustained at a considerable elevation. When they start their flight from the water they flap their wings upon it for some distance, until they are able to raise themselves above it. In alighting, also, they skim the water for some distance.

The indigenous birds remain in the district where they were born, and leave their resting-place soon after sunset in search of food. During the day, however, they will generally be found resting by the side of the water, beneath

the shelter of some flags or rushes, with their heads beneath the feathers of the shoulder. When in search of food, however, they are very nimble, and run lightly upon the boggy ground among the reeds and rushes. As is natural with an aquatic bird, the Teal has web feet, of a brownish-grey colour.

These birds are easily kept in confinement, and if in a suitable position they will breed freely, and will be a source of considerable interest, especially to the fortunate possessors of ornamental waters, where their habits of remaining attached to their birthplace will be an especial advantage. Many of our readers may call to mind instances of their presence upon the ornamental waters of our public and other parks, whilst the Teals at the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, have been especially successful.

The Nuthatch.

NUTHATCH.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE NUTHATCH

Sitta europæa.

ALTHOUGH pretty in plumage, still more is the Nuthatch interesting in its habits. It is very nearly allied to the Woodpecker tribe, but it has also many habits, tricks, and manners different from those birds, especially in its food and the manner of obtaining it, as also a peculiarity in plastering up the aperture to its nest. This bird received especial notice from the Rev. Gilbert White, he having mentioned it as many as four times in that enchanting work of his, the "History of Selborne." His first notice of it is in reference to the manner in which it obtains the kernel from out the nut. In that locality it was known as the "Jar Bird;" but it has also

the local names of "Woodcracker" and "Nutjobber," and (having reference to its nest) it is very frequently known as the "Mudstopper."

The whole of the upper part of the Nuthatch is of a pretty slate-grey colour; the throat, breast, and belly are buff, shading upon the flanks and under tail-coverts to chesnut; from the base of the beak, past the eye, and running to the back of the ear, is a streak of black, which, separating the grey of the upper part from the buff of the breast, gives character to its distinctive prettiness. The legs and claws are light brown. The foot has three toes in front and one behind, which are especially strong, as, in climbing, this bird does not use its tail as does the Woodpecker, which bird has also a different arrangement of its feet. The wings are short, as is also the tail, and both are rounded. The white edging of the feathers of the tail are very plainly discernible when the bird is flying.

The length of the Nuthatch is about six inches.

The male bird is considered handsomer than the female, although it will take an experienced eye to tell the difference; yet it will generally be found that the female has not such bright chesnut brown upon the flanks.

These birds generally associate in couples (which is one of the peculiarities, too, of the Woodpecker tribe), and are also somewhat "local" in their choice of a home. They usually affect woods, plantations, and parks, especially if the latter have fine old oak or other forest trees; yet it cannot be said that the Nuthatch is a scarce bird.

Their food is principally composed of nuts, but they also eat corn and grain, acorns and beech-nuts, whilst (possibly as a corrective to so much vegetable food) they will at times feed upon beetles, caterpillars, and other

insects and their larvæ. The manner in which they obtain the kernel of the nut is very interesting. When a nut has been obtained, it is placed in a crevice of the bark of a tree, or in a crack or slit of a paling or gate-post, and by continuous knockings with its hard bill, by dint of perseverance the most stubborn shell is at length broken and the contents extracted. They, like squirrels, often lay up a stock of nuts for a possible "rainy day;" and if nuts be placed in suitable positions near their haunts, Nuthatches will often find them out, break the shells, and eat them. It is during this operation that they make the peculiar rapping noise that has so often attracted attention. The stroke of their bills against the hard shell of the nut can be heard upwards of two hundred yards away.

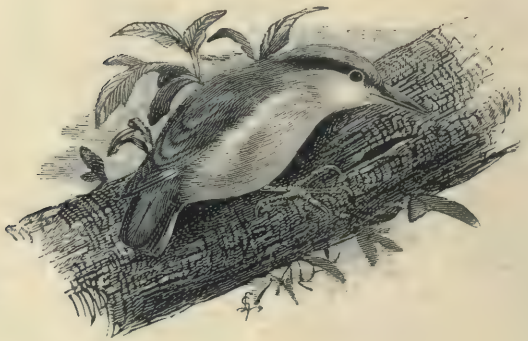
The nest of the Nuthatch is placed in a hole in a tree or old stump, and even at times in a hay-rick. The nest is not very artistic; but if the hole by which it is approached be too large, these birds will, with most exemplary patience, build it up with mud or clay, after the manner of House Martens, until they leave just sufficient room for the purpose of ingress and egress. The nest proper is built of dry leaves, moss, bits of bark and wood, and sometimes a few dry bents of grass. The eggs vary in number from five to nine, and are of an oval form, greyish-white in colour, but spotted, and even at times much blotched, with reddish-brown. The young resemble their parents, but are not so handsome.

The song of the Nuthatch is but slight, yet plaintive, and only to be heard during breeding-time; its call-note, which is often repeated, resembles the phrase "Whit-whit-whit."

Although undulating, the flight of these birds, possibly

in consequence of the formation of the wings and tail, is somewhat heavy; and they seldom will be found to take a more extended flight than from tree to tree.

There is scarcely an aviary more interesting than one containing a Nuthatch, some Tits, and a Woodpecker. By their unflagging motions—now creeping up, now crawling down, the sides of the aviary—by their peculiar manner of taking their food, and by their interesting vivacity, especially in the matter of stealing the nuts that the Nuthatch has cracked, these birds will repay any one who may be fond of bird pets.



The Golden Eagle.

GOLDEN EAGLE.

(⅛ Scale.)

THE GOLDEN EAGLE.

Aquila chrysaëtos.

THIS splendid creature may fairly be considered to hold the premier position amongst British birds; its majestic appearance, boldness, and muscular development are unapproached by any other member of the feathered tribes, whilst the solitary habits of its life, and the wild romantic scenery in which it is most commonly found, add additional interest and charm to its character.

The Golden Eagle is not nearly so frequently seen in Great Britain as in former times; and, although rapacious in its appetite, and terribly destructive in its habits, it is, nevertheless, much to be regretted that so magnificent a creature should —in our country, at any

rate—be growing so surely and rapidly extinct. Specimens of the Golden Eagle have occasionally been met with in nearly every part of the United Kingdom, but it is most frequently seen in the northern parts of Scotland and the islands lying to the north and west. As already intimated, it is common nowhere, and is rapidly becoming scarcer. Of late years, however, in some parts of Scotland it has been strictly preserved.

It is found in North America, more especially towards the Arctic regions, and also in Iceland, Scandinavia, Russia, Germany, France, Northern Africa, and Asia Minor.

The adult male is about three feet in length, the female, like most birds of the same class, being larger than her mate. The beak is of a bluish horn colour, darkening towards the tip; the cere yellow; the skin of the lore has a bluish tinge; the irides are hazel, pupils black; on the top of the head the feathers are pointed, and rufous-brown; the general colour of the body is a dark brown; the wing-coverts are reddish and blackish-brown, the wings being black and blackish-brown; the tail feathers are a varied mixture of brown, the ends being much darker; the under parts and the feathers on the legs, which reach to the foot, are bay; the toes are yellow, with three broad scales on the extremities; claws black. In young specimens the plumage is darker, and the half of the tail nearest the body is quite white; in this condition it is known by some naturalists as the Ring-tailed Eagle.

The nest of this bird is usually placed on some high, precipitous rock or crag, and only accessible with difficulty.

The nest is large and flat, and is composed of strong sticks, the structure extending over an area of several feet. Two or three eggs are laid: they are about three inches in

length, and nearly two and a half in breadth, of a greyish or dirty white colour, mottled nearly all over with markings of pale brownish-red.

Incubation lasts about a month, and when the young birds make their appearance they are covered with a soft greyish down. At this period the parents are even fiercer and more destructive than at other times, feeding their offspring in a most liberal and unsparing manner, and levying contributions on the live stock generally that may happen to be within the vicinity.

The food consists of grouse, hares, rabbits, poultry, young lambs, and indeed, anything and everything living that can be carried off. The courage and audacity of the Golden Eagle have long since become proverbial, and numberless instances are recorded in which this bird has attacked sheep, goats, deer, and animals of similar size. It seldom feeds upon fish, and probably not at all upon anything it may find dead.

The flight is at once easy and powerful, and the motion of the bird as it sweeps along through the air is truly majestic and dignified. Its note consists of two syllables, which may be described as a couple of short sharp shrieks rapidly repeated. When perched, the Golden Eagle has a bold, defiant attitude, the eyes being fierce and penetrating. It never loses the fierce, intractable character of its disposition, and persons who have kept these birds through lengthened periods of captivity state that they lose but little of their native ferocity, and exhibit in only a very slight degree any preference for or familiarity with their attendants. The age attained by the Golden Eagle is a matter of some little doubt, some writers affirming that they live occasionally to be a hundred years old; there can, however,

be no doubt that their longevity is far more remarkable than that of any other family of the feathered tribes.

These birds, even when kept for some years in confinement, evince great restlessness both in the morning and evening, the times at which in their wild state they leave and return to their nest. This peculiarity is likewise noticeable in Golden Eagles which have never tasted the sweets of liberty at all, but have been taken from the nest.

The Cruskill.

CROSSBILL.

(¾ Scale.)

THE CROSSBILL.

Loxia curvirostra.

AS its name denotes, the great specialty of this bird is the peculiar formation of its beak. At first sight it would appear to be unnatural and useless, but is in reality exactly fitted to the purpose of obtaining the food that Nature has assigned to the bird.

But the formation of the beak is not the only special feature of the Crossbill, as the changes of plumage are remarkable. When young, the male birds are greenish-brown, with a tinge of olive, the whole being speckled with darker brown; they are, however, lighter upon the under parts; but after the first moult a red tinge prevails, occasioned by the tipping of the feathers with that hue. The red is

much darker upon the upper parts. At the second moulting these colours are lost, and the bird's plumage becomes an olive-brown, shaded over with greenish-yellow upon the back, though it is much lighter upon the under parts, and is speckled with orange upon the breast and rump.

The females are, however, either grey, with a little green on the head, breast, and rump, or else speckled in an irregular manner with those colours.

Bechstein says (and he is a great authority) :—"If the Crossbills are grey or speckled, they are young; if red, they are one year old, and have just moulted; if carmine, they are just about to moult for the second time; if spotted with red and yellow, they are two years old and in full feather. All these differences may be noted except at the time of laying; for as they do not make their nest at any fixed season, so neither is their moulting regular, from which arises the great variety in their appearance."

Therefore, the Crossbill very much resembles the Linnet in its assumption of the red plumage; and if kept in confinement, the same difference in moulting occurs. Young Crossbills bred in aviaries never acquire the red colour, but remain grey during the second year, or else moult to the greenish-yellow of the more adult bird.

The general form of the Crossbill is somewhat similar to that of the Greenfinch, but they vary in size almost as much as in colour.

The beak is used in climbing somewhat after the manner of Parrots.

Bechstein thus describes their nesting operations, which take place in Northern Europe, Asia, and America :—"Its incubation is the most remarkable of its peculiarities, for it breeds between December and April. It builds its nest in

the upper branches of coniferous trees, of thin pine or fir twigs, on which is placed a thick layer of earth moss, lined within with the finest coral moss. The female lays three to five greyish-white eggs, having at the thick end a circle of reddish-brown stripes and spots. Like all Grosbeaks, they feed their young with food disgorged from their own crops."

Their food consists chiefly of fir seeds, which the peculiar formation of the beak assists the bird greatly in extracting from the fir-cones; they will, however, feed upon the ground, as well as upon the branches of the trees. They also feed upon the seeds of the pine and alder, and the buds and flowers of the sumach. They are very fond, too, of the seeds of crab-apples, in extracting which their beaks, forming saws, are put to very great use.

Their general abode is necessarily amidst the forests of firs and pines that clothe the hills and mountains, but that only when the cones are abundant.

About October (but they are just as erratic in their migration as in other respects) they begin to arrive in England from the Continent; their numbers vary greatly, sometimes many birds arriving, and again, even in the succeeding year, but few of them grace this island with their presence. Their return to the Continent is quite as uncertain, as small parties depart at different periods.

The song of the Crossbill is harsh, and has but little melody; but the call whilst flying from tree to tree may be represented by "soc-soc-soc." Its general call is, however, "chip-chip-chip."

Their flight is close and rapid, and they generally fly together—sometimes in small parties, but at others in larger numbers.

This bird is not very generally known in England, on account of its short stay with us; and except for the peculiar formation of its beak, the many varieties of its plumage might be a source of indecision in the minds of many amateur ornithologists.

The Crossbills, somewhat like Parrots, are easily tameable, and may be kept either in a cage or aviary; their beaks, however, are very strong, and the cage should, therefore, be principally of tin and wire, as mere mahogany is very easily torn to pieces by the birds. A spirit of mischief, too, seems to induce them to demolish their cage if it happens to be of wood. They are, however, somewhat hardy, and will climb about their cage with the aid of their beak, in a manner to warrant their being called the "European Parrot."

The Goldfinch.

GOLDFINCH.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE GOLDFINCH.

Fringilla carduelis—Linnæus.
Carduelis elegans—M'Gillivray.

MANY are the birds deserving the attention of ornithologists; but few more so than the sprightly Goldfinch. Unfortunately, of late years our little friends have greatly decreased in numbers; and so much has this been deplored, that, as a last resort, even the aid of Parliament has been invoked to help preserve this and other sweet little birds from extirpation.

The truthful accuracy of the artist's brush renders description superfluous; we need merely draw the reader's attention to it to call forth the acknowledgment that the Goldfinch is undoubtedly one of the most strikingly beautiful of British birds. It is about five inches in length, the hen being a trifle smaller; but the difference between the sexes

is so minute, that few, except naturalists, can distinguish it. In the hen (although they frequently differ) it will be generally found that the feathers immediately over the beak are light brown instead of black; the crimson "blaze" does not extend past the eye; and the black feathers upon the crown of the head are edged with brown, as also are the small feathers at the shoulder of the wing.

Being generally distributed throughout England, in the spring-time this interesting pair of birds are to be found busily "prospecting" their neighbourhood in search of a nesting-place. Although a preference is shown for the forked branches of an apple or pear tree in an orchard, yet they sometimes choose an oak, elm, or other tree, and upon the lichen-covered branches they industriously commence building their nest. This structure is a masterpiece of bird architecture, composed of moss, wool, and other materials, with a lining of horse-hair, and an inner and softer lining of the down procured by the birds from the ripe seeds of the dandelion and groundsel; the exterior being embellished in so lavish a manner with lichen, that it is scarcely distinguishable from the tree in which it is built.

The eggs are about five in number, of a pale greenish-blue, spotted and streaked with purple and brown at the larger end. After fourteen days the young are hatched, and are fed from the crop by both parents until able to leave the nest, when the birds escort their little family to some convenient spot where food is plentiful, and there continue feeding them for a few days with most assiduous attention.

The parent birds are at this time feeding principally upon the seeds of the dandelion and groundsel, often visiting the sides of the country roads for the former,

whilst a neglected garden will offer a choice selection of the latter.

Meanwhile the hen has not been idle, but has selected a site for a new nest, and the male bird rejoining her, they go through their domestic programme anew. Goldfinches have often as many as four nests in the year, so that their powers of propagation are very great.

Although building so elaborate a nest, some Goldfinches, from choosing slender branches that sway with the wind, often find the contents of their nests are consequently blown away by severe gales. The use of horse-hair is sometimes disastrous, as in one case we remember finding the hen dead, hanging by a noose of hair from her own nest.

The young birds, called until their first moult "grey pates," from having mottled grey heads, backs, and breasts, instead of the adult red, black, white, and brown, have otherwise the appearance of the mature birds, inasmuch as the flight and tail feathers are retained until the second moult. In the months of August and September and beginning of October, the different broods having for a long time congregated in such places as afford the most abundant supply of button-weed, thistles, &c., used in the latter month sometimes to number as many as two hundred birds, though those proportions are seldom attained now. By that time almost all the young birds have attained the adult plumage, and commence their migration, proceeding in small flocks towards the south coast, passing Brighton, and from Beachy Head and adjacent parts of the coast start upon their journey across the English Channel. But the Goldfinch is only partially migratory, and whilst so many proceed upon their perilous journey in search of warmer climes, a great many stay

behind and brave the rigours of our climate. In a severe winter (such as that of 1880–1881) many birds perish, and amongst them the Goldfinch suffers severely, numbers having been picked up dead from the effects of cold and hunger. Through the winter those remaining are found in various localities feeding upon the seeds of the thistle, button-weed, teazle, and even hanging upon the alder-trees searching for the seeds. These form their staple food, but the appetite of the Goldfinch requires change, and many another seed serves to support its existence through the winter.

Those birds remaining in this country through the winter are known by the name of "harbour birds," whilst those arriving in spring-time from abroad are known as "flight birds." The latter are far the handsomer, a foreign and warmer climate having intensified the brilliancy of their plumage, and are easily distinguishable from the less forward "harbour birds." The "flight birds" arrive in this country about the beginning of April, and, after mating, commence their arrangements for nesting as described.

The Eider Duck.

EIDER DUCK.

(⅛ Scale.)

X

THE EIDER DUCK.

Anas mollissima.
Somateria mollissima.

FROM a commercial point of view, the Eider Duck is probably the most valuable member of the Duck family. The fine down so much prized and admired, known as eider-down, is obtained from these birds, and always commands a very high price. In Norway, Iceland, and Greenland, they are consequently strictly protected when breeding, and by judiciously removing the eggs and down from the nest, the birds lay again and furnish a fresh supply, and each duck is said to yield about four ounces of down.

In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden this bird is variously known as the Eider, Eder, or Edder. Its range extends to Iceland, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, the Faröe Islands, Baffin's Bay, and

many northern localities of North America. Specimens are occasionally met with in the southern counties of England, but these cases are far from numerous, as the bird is more attached to the colder climates of the north; the Fern Islands, on the coast of Northumberland, and the isles of the Hebrides and Orkney being the principal localities resorted to in Great Britain.

The name of St. Cuthbert's Duck is also given to this bird, owing to the fact of its breeding on St. Cuthbert's Isle in considerable numbers and with great regularity.

The Eider Duck, from the peculiar position of the legs, walks with difficulty and awkwardness; consequently it seldom in the day-time remains long upon dry land. It is, however, a splendid swimmer, dives constantly, and is capable of remaining beneath the surface of the water for some considerable time. Its food consists of fish, shelled mollusca, crustacea, and marine insects, which are procured by the bird either on the surface or at various depths beneath. Very little, if any, vegetable matter is taken into the stomach.

The Eider Duck is more or less gregarious at all times, and it is often seen in considerable numbers on the open sea. It is a day feeder, and is said often to spend its nights on land, being one of the earliest birds astir in the morning, going to the sea to feed at the first streak of dawn.

Nesting is commenced in May, the birds leaving the mainland and assembling on islands for this purpose. The nest is made of fine seaweed, and as the eggs are laid they are covered by the parent bird with down plucked from its breast. By the time the last egg is laid the covering of down thus deposited is considerable, and doubtless by its

warmth materially assists in the process of incubation. The usual number of eggs is from five to eight; they are pale green in colour, about three inches in length and two inches in breadth. The male bird takes no part in incubation, and seldom approaches very close to the nest.

The young take to the water very soon after being hatched, and are covered with down, dark on the upper part and lighter underneath. Yarrell states that in some instances they are carried there by the female in her bill, as the nest is sometimes placed in such a situation as to preclude the possibility of its being done in any other way.

The powers of flight of the Eider Duck are only moderate, but it rises from the water with less effort than many other ducks.

It is easily domesticated, but the young are troublesome to rear, and are subject to frequent mishaps in the poultry-yard, being, as already stated, clumsy and uncertain walkers.

In the adult male the beak is dusky green; the nail white; top of the head velvet-black; lore and cheeks white; ear-coverts and occiput pale green; back, scapulars, tertials, point of wing, and smaller wing-coverts white; greater wing-coverts black; wing primaries and secondaries dull black, the tertials elongated, and falling partly over them; rump black; tail feathers dull black; chin and upper part of neck in front white; lower part of the neck pale buff; breast, belly, sides, and all the under surface black, except a patch of white on the flank; legs, toes, and their membranes dusky green. The entire length is about twenty-five inches.

The female differs in appearance considerably from her mate, the plumage being a pale brown tinged with red,

and varied with markings of darker brown. The young males at first resemble the female, the pure white being slowly assumed, and the complete adult plumage is not acquired until after the first year.

In the winter these ducks are remarkably shy and wary, and it is only by carefully stalking that they can be approached within gun-shot. In the breeding season, however, when the eggs approach hatching, the females will often allow themselves to be touched by the hand as they sit on their eggs.

The Spoonbill.

SPOONBILL.

($\frac{1}{8}$ Scale.)

THE SPOONBILL.

Platalea leucorodia.

AT one time this handsome and somewhat singular-looking bird was far more frequently met with in this country than it is at the present day. The continual increase in agricultural pursuits, and the necessary draining and reclamation of fenny and marshy land, has materially contracted the extent and number of its haunts, and consequently the Spoonbill, like the Bittern and one or two other interesting birds, is gradually, but surely, becoming scarce.

According to some of the older writers on birds, the Spoonbill used to breed regularly and in considerable numbers in England, notably at the herneries at Claxton and Rudham; but circumstances have changed considerably since those days, and now, at

any rate in most localities, if even a rumour is heard of a Spoonbill having been seen, the enthusiasm of every one accustomed to a gun is instantly aroused, and it must be indeed a lucky bird that succeeds in quitting the neighbourhood alive. Despite its rarity, this bird has been seen at different times, either singly or in small flocks, in most of the counties of Great Britain, although, as already intimated, these instances are few and far between, and in no one locality can its presence be counted on with certainty. It is said to be plentiful in some parts of Europe, especially Holland, Hungary, Italy, and the south of France, from which places those that are usually seen hanging up in Leadenhall and other large markets are no doubt generally imported.

In its flight the Spoonbill is slow and steady; the wings have a regular movement, and the neck and legs are extended to their full length; when standing, the neck usually takes the form of a double curve, like a letter S.

The food consists of different items, including aquatic insects, tadpoles, shrimps, worms, small fish, and leeches; they usually feed by daylight.

The bird is said to feed when standing in several inches of water, and to collect its food principally by ploughing the water about in the soft mud or sand with its spade-like bill, keeping it open until it comes across some dainty morsel, when it closes the mandibles before taking them out of the water. But those who have seen a duck feed need no very laboured explanation, which only seems to be required because most of the tall wading birds are fishers, and hence possess the pointed bill of the heron; whereas the Spoonbill, like the duck, is a general aquatic and mud feeder.

As may be imagined by the sort of food it takes, the Spoonbill resorts to marshes, ditches, damp low-lying grounds, fens, muddy tidal rivers, and pools left by the receding tide on the sea-shore. It is said to make a peculiar rattling noise with its bill. It is a retired, unobtrusive bird in its wild state, and generally seen flying at a very considerable height, but when captive becomes tame, feeding freely, and soon showing signs of attachment, especially if taken when young. It is a great attraction in Regent's Park and near other ornamental waters.

The nest is commonly built either in a tree, or else on the ground amongst reeds and rushes; it is roughly put together, and consists of sticks, dried roots, and coarse grass. Generally, if the locality permits, several nests are to be found close together; the eggs are about two-and-a-half inches in length; they vary in number from two to four, some entirely white, and others white, spotted with light brownish-red.

The length of the Spoonbill is about thirty-one or thirty-two inches; the bill, which is its peculiar characteristic, is black, marked with lead colour and yellow at the point: it is about nine inches long, strong, and flattened out at the extremity into the shape of a spoon, from which circumstance, of course, the name is derived; the skin of the chin and part of the throat is naked and yellow, the irides red. With the exception of a band of buff-coloured feathers at the bottom of the neck, and a narrow stripe of the same up the sides of the neck, the whole of the plumage is white; on the back of the head the feathers are lengthened, and form a distinct plume. The legs, toes, and claws are black, and the toes are connected a little

distance up by a membrane. Like the heron, the legs are long and stout.

There is but little difference in the appearance of the sexes; the female, however, does not attain the size of the male so early in life, and the plume is smaller, but the plumage, with this exception, no way differs from that of the male bird.

The young birds have no plume at all, and the beak is smaller, lighter, and less firm in its texture.

The Spoonbill is migratory in its habits, its principal summer residence being the northern parts of Europe; the winter it usually spends in the warmer climate of the south, the sea coasts and salt marshes of Italy being, according to Yarrell, very favourite winter resorts. The flesh of this interesting bird is said to be capital eating, and by no means rank or fishy in flavour.

The Peregrine Falcon

PEREGRINE-FALCON.

(¼ Scale.)

THE PEREGRINE-FALCON.

Falco peregrinus.
Falco communis.

THIS notable-looking Falcon possesses, so to speak, a double interest for all lovers of English birds. It was highly appreciated by our ancestors, at least by those who loved the sport of falconry, for its extreme docility, splendid powers of flight, and the daring spirit it exhibited in the chase; and it is to be equally admired, apart from its historic associations, for its symmetrical proportions, handsome plumage, and generally striking appearance. Like all the *Falconidæ*, the Peregrine-falcon is marvellously rapid in all its ærial movements; it spends a great deal of its time on the wing, and sweeps over wood and plain, valley and hill, with an ease and

buoyancy that never fails to excite interest and admiration. When in pursuit of its prey, the Peregrine-falcon is relentless and undaunted, following it even into the presence of man himself, and only abandoning the chase with the greatest reluctance. It has been frequently seen following some unfortunate bird that has sought to escape by soaring, until pursuer and pursued have both completely disappeared from sight in the regions of the upper air. Indeed, so absorbed does this bird become when following its victim, and so great is the terror and confusion it inspires, that occasionally both the Falcon and the fugitive are dashed against some tree, rock, or other obstacle, unnoticed in their excitement by either.

When flying, this bird does not so often "sail" as some of the other members of the family, but uses the wings very quickly, beating the air with them in a manner something resembling the action of the wild pigeon. In securing its feathered prey, the Peregrine-falcon seldom clutches it in its talons, but strikes it to the earth with great violence, rising after the blow is delivered a little in the air, and wheeling round to carry off the quarry, which in most cases is hopelessly injured or killed outright. Its food consists of partridges, plovers, grouse, pigeons, curlews, ducks, lerevets, rabbits, rats, and indeed almost any similar-sized bird or quadruped. It has often been known to visit the farm-yards and take away young chickens.

The nest, when not built upon some lofty tree, is commonly placed on a projection or in a crevice of a crag or cliff; it is made of sticks and roots, sometimes intermingled with seaweed, and lined with wool or hair. The eggs number from two to five: they are of a well-rounded

shape, and in colour a reddish-russet, patched, marbled, and streaked with darker shades. The birds show a particular partiality to some places. There has been a pair of Peregrine-falcons breeding at Beachy Head, Sussex, every year since 1840, though nearly every year the young ones have been taken, and several seasons the old birds have been shot.

The cry is a loud, harsh cackle, repeated several times, not unlike that of the Kestrel.

The parents are more fierce and courageous during the breeding season than at any other period, defending their domestic possessions with great intrepidity and spirit.

The young birds are expelled from the nest as soon as they are competent to provide for their own requirements, and it is generally believed that the old birds remain near the same haunts for some considerable time after the young birds have left.

The Peregrine-falcon is to be met with in nearly all the European countries, but more particularly in those where rocky coasts and glens are frequent, in most parts of North America, and it is stated to be an occasional visitor to such southerly regions as the Cape of Good Hope. In Great Britain it has been seen in all parts at various times, but perhaps as often in the county of Sussex as anywhere. Instances are recorded of Falcons being shot near Petworth, Lewes, Chichester, Arundel, Shoreham, Brighton, Seaford, Pevensey, and Rye.

The bird varies considerably in size and in plumage, although the mark on the sides of the throat is said to be invariable. It is usually about eighteen to twenty inches long (the female, like all the Falcons, being the larger). The iris is dark hazel-brown; bristly feathers at the base

of the bill; head greyish- or bluish-black; neck white in front, divided from the bluish-black of the back part by a dark streak from the bill; breast creamy-white, mottled and streaked with dark spots; sides ash-grey, lined and barred with brown; back bluish slate-colour, and barred with greyish-black. The wings, which are very long and pointed, are ash-brown, faintly barred; under wing-coverts whitish and barred. The tail is slightly rounded, bluish-grey or bluish-black, and barred with dark brown. Legs are dull yellow, feathered half-way down, and scaled; toes scaled and dull yellow; claws blackish, sharp and strong. The female is more brownish than the male, and the bars are less distinct. The young birds when first hatched are covered with white down, and not nearly so handsome as the adults until after the second moult.

The Contents.

KESTREL (MALE).
($\frac{5}{12}$ Scale.)

THE KESTREL.

Falco tinnunculus.

FOR many years this handsome little bird was subject to a most unwarrantable persecution, but this is now dying out, since systematic investigation has proved that the Kestrel is a bird deserving particular protection, instead of wanton and thoughtless destruction.

The bird is known in many districts as the "Windhover," from the peculiar manner in which it regulates its flight whilst in search of food. This flight is generally rapid, but varies, the onward progress being repeatedly stopped, and the bird sustaining itself in one position, apparently motionless, and, as it were, suspended, whilst with piercing eyes it anxiously searches the grass or stubble beneath; the slightest quiver is sufficient indication of its prey, when, upon poised wing, down drops the bird like a stone to the earth. The unfortunate mouse or other

prey is invariably secured, and the Kestrel then retreats to the shelter of an adjacent tree or hedgerow to devour it. But not alone mice of various kinds, but many another farmer's pest is destroyed by the Kestrel, as its food is varied according to the seasons. In the spring Cockchafers, Grasshoppers, and such-like insects, form its staple food, though possibly an occasional bird or mouse suffers capture; as the summer merges into autumn the Kestrel may be seen hovering over the stubble fields upon the watch for mice, of which destructive little quadruped it is almost as great a destroyer as the Owl itself. This handsome little hawk will also take rats, and has been known to take young chickens, and will even attack as large a bird as a Starling. The Kestrel tears its food after the manner of the rest of hawks. When autumn advances and the scattered corn of the stubble fields becomes exhausted, most mice desert the open fields and take refuge in ricks, rarely showing themselves outside, and therefore the Kestrel too has to look about for fresh hunting-grounds; and so it is, no doubt, that the Kestrel, about this time, becomes more or less migratory. Some merely change their district, whilst others take a more lengthened flight to the Continent.

McGillivray says the Kestrel does not eat birds, but the contrary has been many times proved. Many Kestrels, too, have been taken in bird-catchers' nets when in the very act of attacking the brace, or call-birds, and are, in consequence, invariably driven off when observed. And again, when replete with food, this bird is oftentimes mobbed by an assemblage of smaller birds, who, at such times, congregate together in the common cause quite

irrespective of species. This is accompanied with an incessant reproachful chatter as if telling of past fears, and appears to greatly incense the Kestrel, until a sudden exhibition of its latent powers disperses the little would-be assailants, and the bird continues its flight to some congenial spot where it may digest its meal in peace.

The plumage of the Kestrel changes with age: the young, though handsome, being much plainer than the adult bird. The general ground colour is a pretty reddish-brown fawn colour, the feathers being striped with black down the quill to the tip, upon the breast, and transversely upon the back, these latter feathers being slightly edged with greyish-brown; the tail is barred with black and the extremities edged with white. After the second year the male bird becomes greyish blue upon the head and neck down to the shoulders, and also becomes possessed of a tail of rather deeper blue, barred with black, and tipped with white, and at the same time loses the spots upon the breast and back. There is little doubt but that the male bird becomes handsomer with age, the plumage at successive moults becoming more brilliant and generally richer in tone, whilst the female becomes darker. The length of an adult male is about thirteen inches, whilst the female attains to about fifteen inches.

The nest of the Kestrel is placed in as peculiar positions as the bird is erratic in its building; in fact, oftentimes it is nothing but the deserted nest of a Magpie, or any other large nest perched in the top of a tree, and even at times it will appropriate the deserted home of a Squirrel; at other times it will build in the crevices of chalk cliffs and chalk pits. The eggs are usually from four to five in number, having a ground colour of dirty

pale-bluish white, so blotched over with reddish brown as to greatly obscure the primary colour.

As may be inferred from the nature of its food (the capture of which essentially demands a watchful silence), the voice of the Kestrel is seldom heard. It is possessed of a harsh querulous kind of scream, uttered more particularly whilst devouring its food; though when disturbed it utters a rapid kind of screaming chatter.

The Paper-Bill.

RAZOR-BILL.
(¼ Scale.)

THE RAZOR-BILL.

Alca torda.

IF the reader will for a moment glance at the beak of the bird in the illustration he will see that the name "Razor-bill" is a very appropriate one.

The creature to which this peculiarly-shaped appendage belongs is a well-known inhabitant of most, if not all, of the seas surrounding the islands of Great Britain. Like the common Guillemot, it spends most of its time upon the "sad sea waves," and, with the exception of those periods occupied in breeding and rearing its young, it seldom troubles *terra firma* with its presence. It feeds upon the lesser crustacea, and any of the smaller kinds of fishes, pursuing its prey with ease

and certainty. It swims and dives equally well, and is quite as capable of securing its food below the water as on the surface. Like most birds of this class, the water is its proper element, and its easy and rapid movements therein offer a great contrast to its clumsy efforts at locomotion when upon dry land. When disturbed and compelled to take to its wings, it rises in the air with difficulty, splashing along on the water for some little distance. The flight is however rapid, strong, and capable of being sustained for a considerable distance, far more powerful than would be imagined by the comparative smallness of the wings.

This bird is probably an exclusively North-Atlantic species. It breeds on the sea rocks (in greater or less numbers) from Cornwall to Shetland, round the coast of Ireland, the Channel Islands and St. Kilda. Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador are also stated as localities frequented by the Razor-bill for breeding purposes, as are also the rocky shores of Norway.

The Razor-bill lays but one egg, the measurement of which is about two inches and three-quarters by one inch and ten lines; the grounding is white, and the markings are reddish-brown and blackish-brown, but the eggs are subject to much variation.

The Razor-bill must be considered as a rather late breeder, as its eggs are seldom found before the middle of May. The birds begin to assemble with Puffins, Guillemots, and Gulls at their breeding-places about the end of March or the beginning of the following month, and the sea, rocks, and precipices are then crowded with vast numbers. According to some authorities, Razor-bills pair for life, and regularly return year after year to the same identical crevice

or cranny to deposit their egg and rear their young. In choosing a suitable place in which to deposit its egg the bird almost invariably selects some hole or crevice or cleft in the rock, carefully avoiding ledges and similarly exposed situations. Instances have been recorded in which the egg has been deposited in a Puffin burrow, and even in the deserted nest of a Cormorant. Seebohm states that "both birds share in the task of hatching their solitary egg, and incubation lasts about a month."

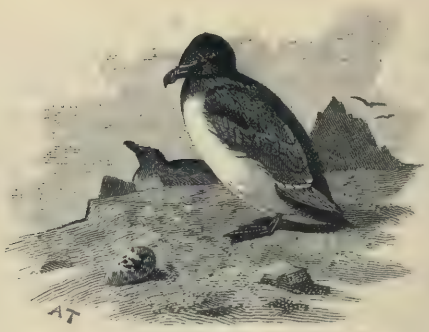
It is said that the young Razor-bills are sometimes conveyed to the water in the bill of the old bird, and that on the sea they are taught to dive by their parents.

The beak is black; it is large and much compressed, the end is curved, and the extremity of the lower mandible forms a salient angle with the upper one; there are three transverse grooves and one white line on the upper mandible, and two transverse grooves and a white line on the lower mandible. The basal half of the beak is covered with feathers.

The sexes do not differ in plumage. From the top of the beak to each eye there is a well-defined streak of pure white; irides dark brown; the whole of the head, chin, throat, hind part of neck, back, wings and tail black; the tips of the secondary quill-feathers are white, forming a band across the wing; the breast, and all the under surface of the body pure white; legs, toes, and their membranes brownish-black. The tail is short and pointed. The entire length of the bird is about seventeen inches, being rather larger than the Puffin.

The young birds, when about three weeks old, are covered with down, the whole of the upper part being of

a sooty colour, and from the chin to the vent underneath white, the only feathers visible being a few in the wing; but the other feathers grow very rapidly through the down, and the young birds are soon like the adult in plumage, except that the feathers on the neck, throat, and sides of the head are white until after the spring moult, and are only black during the breeding season.



The Blackbird.

BLACKBIRD.

(⅓ Scale.)

THE BLACKBIRD.

Turdus merula.

KNOWN in various parts of the country by the names of "Merle" and "Ousel" (although now somewhat obsolete), the Blackbird was thus concisely described by Shakspeare, *i.e.*—

"The woosel cock so black of hue,
With orange tawny bill."

The plumage of the male Blackbird is of an uniform deep black, not radiant, as in the Raven, although it is certainly a little more brilliant in spring-time. The beak of the adult bird is of a rich yellow; the eyelids, too, are of the same hue. The plumage of the female is blackish-brown, lighter upon the throat and breast, which latter is tinged with rust colour, and the beak is much duller, becoming partially yellow in the breeding season.

This bird is known almost as well as the Thrush, its sombre plumage and yellow beak possibly attracting the attention of observers. If disturbed, it has a peculiar habit, much more marked than in the Thrush, of lying close in the hedgerow or other cover; but immediately the danger has passed will rise suddenly, uttering a frightened sort of screaming clatter, and hurry off with a low flight to some more safe retreat. The general flight of the bird is, however, somewhat heavy and low, but at the migratory period is sustained at a considerable height.

Our subject is not a gregarious bird, seldom more than a pair being seen in close proximity; indeed, it is the rule for them to keep separate. They generally frequent hedgerows, copses, thickets, and furze, but may be often found in thick shrubberies, and also in gardens. It is in various positions, too, that they build their nests; sometimes it will be placed in a garden or in a tree at some height from the ground, yet it is generally found in a hedgerow, especially if bordering upon a copse or wood; they will even breed upon the stump of a tree or upon the ground. Large faggot-stacks, too, are often chosen. They will at times build near to dwelling-places, and, as there is at such season but little vegetation, the nest is consequently much exposed.

The nest is built early in the spring, and is formed of an outer shell of coarse roots and grasses, with the mud still adhering, and as this dries it forms a strong foundation; it is lined inside with finer grasses and roots. The eggs are four or five in number.

Very many instances have been recorded of the devotion of Blackbirds to their young, sometimes even cats

having been successfully assailed. The parents are very attentive to their offspring, and feed them with exemplary patience.

The plumage of the young whilst in the nest shows almost as much difference as that of the parents. They are blackish-brown on the upper parts, each feather being streaked with reddish-brown in the centre, the male being darker than the female; the under parts are a light reddish-brown tipped with dark spots, which are clearer in the males; the males, too, having blackish-brown wings and tail, whilst the female's are of a lighter brown. The young do not obtain the rich yellow beak until the succeeding spring; before then it is brown. The female's beak may possibly become a brighter yellow with age, and it may be that the same will happen if she be kept in a cage.

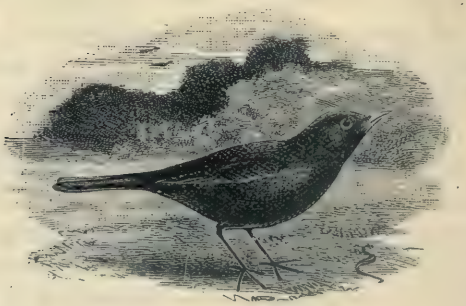
The food of the Blackbird consists chiefly of worms, slugs, caterpillars, beetles, or any such-like insects. It is therefore a great help to the gardener and husbandman, but it is also very fond of fruit, and will create great havoc amongst currants, cherries, strawberries, gooseberries, and even apples. The blackberry, too, furnishes the Blackbird with many a meal, and in winter they will also feed upon hawthorn berries. The young are fed upon a very similar diet to that of the parent birds.

The song of the Blackbird is somewhat similar to that of the Thrush, not in tone so much as in style and execution; though the Blackbird's is not so brilliant or persistent, yet it is possessed of some full, flute-like notes that almost rival the tones of the nightingale. This beautiful song is generally delivered in the morning and evening, although it may be heard throughout the daytime.

A shower seems to have an effectual influence upon the song, inasmuch as it is then that generally the most beautiful notes may be heard pealing forth in the summer twilight.

Although this bird continues in England the whole of the year, it is still partially migratory, many of them arriving in the South whenever the snow has deprived them of the means of living in the North.

The Blackbird may be kept in a cage, which should be of willow-work, and large; when with attention—which he will amply reward with his splendid song—he will do well, except for being apt to break his feathers. It is not quite advisable to place him in an aviary, as he possesses a domineering disposition, and being a large bird—his length being about ten inches—he may become dangerous to the smaller birds, besides eating more than his share of food.



The Jack Snipe.

JACK SNIPE.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE JACK SNIPE.

Scolopax gallinula.

EASILY distinguished from the Common Snipe by its being much smaller, and also by the plumage being richer and showing more varied reflections, the Jack Snipe is a very handsome little bird. The beak is about one-and-a-half inches long, and the whole length of the bird nearly eight-inches-and-a-half. The irides are dark brown; from the eye to the base of the beak is a dark brown streak, and over the eye and ear-coverts a broad line of pale brown. The top of the head and the part above the beak are a rich dark brown; back of the neck greyish-brown, varied with dusky brown marks; the back is a rich dark brown, and darker markings, with two plainly-marked streaks of light brown or buffy yellow,

extending to the tail; on each side of these lines are two smaller ones on the wing.

The primary quill feathers are dusky black, secondaries the same, ending in a white point; tertiaries are brownish-black, spotted and streaked with rich reddish-brown; tail short; the upper tail-coverts are brown; tail greyish-black. Cheeks, chin, and neck greyish-brown, spotted with a darker shade; breast and lower parts white; the legs and toes are dark greenish-brown, and the claws black. The females are not so bright in the plumage as the males, and in the winter the birds are more ash-grey in the reddish-brown parts. The young birds lack the brilliant green and purple reflections so noticeable in the adults.

The Jack Snipe frequents damp, boggy grounds, especially where tufts of coarse grass abound; and when not feeding, it generally conceals itself amongst the rank herbage and rushes common to moist localities.

This bird is remarkable for the reluctance it exhibits to leave the ground, and will almost suffer itself to be trodden upon before it takes to flight. Not even the firing of a gun will disturb it, although but a few yards off; and a bird has been known to be taken by the captor throwing a hat over it as it was about to rise. When compelled to rise into the air, it usually proceeds in a vacillating way, flying but a short distance and then dropping again to the ground. The birds do not congregate in small parties, as the Common Snipe occasionally does, but are generally found singly, though sometimes a pair or more are found within a few yards of each other. It shows a great partiality for certain spots, and can be found in exactly the same place year after year with almost undeviating regu-

larity. It makes no cry when disturbed. The French speak of the bird as the "Deaf Snipe," in allusion to the very little notice or attention it bestows upon persons approaching its haunts.

The Jack Snipe may be designated as a purely winter visitor; it arrives usually about September or October, and remains until the following March or April. It is thus of more pronounced winter habits, arriving later and departing earlier than the Common Snipe; but we once found one as late as the 21st of the latter month on the South Downs, amongst some heather and far away from any water; it is very unusual to find them in such places, and no doubt the bird was on its migration northward.

The nest is commonly built in the vegetation of damp marshy places; the eggs are about four in number, of a yellowish-olive colour, spotted at the larger end with dark and light brown, and rather more than one inch in length. The young birds run soon after they are hatched, and are covered with a very pretty brown down, edged with a lighter colour, which gives them a spotted appearance.

The food of the Jack Snipe consists of small water insects, the larvæ common to wet, boggy places, and the seeds of some water plants.

Russia, Siberia, and the Baltic countries are the more proper home of the Jack Snipe; in Russia and the more western parts of Siberia it is found in immense numbers, breeding in the northern parts of Europe during the summer, and departing in winter for somewhat more temperate climes. It appears also to be pretty widely distributed throughout Northern India. In the winter it is found as far south in Europe as Italy and

France, but does not seek actually warm climates. In Great Britain it is tolerably well distributed, and may be found during the cold season of the year in almost every county from the North of Scotland to the Land's End.

The Bullfinch

BULLFINCH.
(⅔ Scale.)

THE BULLFINCH.

Loxia pyrrhula—Pennant; Bewick.
Pyrrhula vulgaris—Fleming; Selby.

FROM the extreme richness of colour displayed throughout its plumage, this handsome bird has long possessed a prominent position as a cage-bird; and this not alone because of its rich red breast, delicately-shaded grey back, and deep purple-black head, tail, and wings (the latter crossed in a beautiful manner with white), which are known to almost all bird-lovers; but more particularly because the Bullfinch possesses the power of imitation in a very high degree, and if taken from the nest and reared by hand, may be taught to pipe a tune more readily than any other bird. Many persons, however, having obtained possession of a Bullfinch, have been somewhat mortified to find that its natural song is but a plaintive little phrase often repeated in a monotonous manner, and its "call"

peculiarly melancholy! The Bullfinch, however, becomes particularly tame.

Though possessing such handsome plumage, the Bullfinch is somewhat heavily built, the shape of the head and thickness of the throat having undoubtedly earned its name.

In general arrangement of plumage, the hen is somewhat similar to the male, except that the splendid red of the breast and grey of the back is supplied by a dull brown.

An inhabitant of the whole of England, Scotland, and Ireland, it is also well known upon the continent, the Russian Bullfinches being renowned for their exceptionally large size, whilst Germany is the head-quarters of the "piping schools." The Bullfinches of Sussex, too, are notable, most of the prize birds at the Crystal Palace and other shows of late years having emanated from that neighbourhood.

The Bullfinch is extremely fond of trees and hedgerows, sheltered woods and thickets, but in early spring will quit those haunts for gardens and orchards, in its search for food; and it is at this time that it is often found picking the buds of the fruit-trees. Many a controversy has been the consequence, and ingenious apologists have suggested that "Bully" is only picking out the insect-eaten buds; but we fear that in few cases would he choose a damaged one for the sake of the insect if a rich fruit-blossom bud were near. In autumn the ripe blackberries that abound in woods and thickets are a favourite food. Later, in winter, privet berries and dockseeds are its staple; and the Bullfinch may be seen in country roads making a meal upon the docks and plantains that grow by the

wayside. At other times its food consists of the seeds and leaves of the groundsel and sow-thistle, and the remaining hips and haws that have escaped the winter, or any other seeds it may find in its foraging expeditions.

The Bullfinch commences preparations for breeding in the beginning of April. It builds a somewhat loose nest compared with some birds of this class, the structure being composed mostly of twigs and fine roots, with an inner lining of horsehair. This is placed securely in the lower branches of a tree, or the top of a high bush. A very favourite haunt of the Bullfinch is in the quickset hedge which is planted alongside many of our railways, this being generally secluded, and so permitting the birds to live and breed in comparative security. In common with most small birds, Bullfinches have many enemies; and, as if in fear, they wait until the foliage is well spread over the branches before building their nest; but even this precaution is often of no avail, for the clipping of the hedge will often expose the nest. Yet man is certainly not the Bullfinch's worst enemy, for not only jays, but stoats and weasels, are on the watch to destroy them. Unfortunately for the Bullfinch (with other victims), these marauders are far more successful than would be imagined, as a great many nests in a district are rifled of their contents by them in a very short time. However, after the first outburst of sorrow at their loss, the birds almost directly recommence their labours, and in a short time another nest is built, and duly furnished with another set of eggs. They generally have as many as three nests in the year, and, if any of those nests are destroyed, will even exceed that number. There are generally five eggs, of a pale blue colour, speckled and

streaked with purple at the larger end, and they take about fifteen days in hatching, the hen sitting very closely, whilst the male pays her every attention. The young are fed from the crop by the parent birds until of sufficient age to shift for themselves, when the parents commence building afresh. At this time the plumage of the young is considerably different from the male parent bird; the breast being yellowish-brown, and the black upon the head and the grey upon the back greyish-brown, until the first moult. The sex is not distinguishable until moulting discloses red feathers upon the breast.

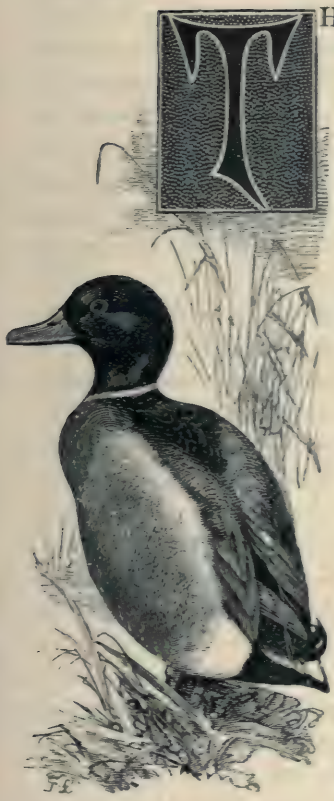
There having been several instances of this bird turning black: it has been said by most naturalists, from the Rev. Gilbert White, of Selborne, down to the present day, that this was the result of feeding upon hemp seed; but one in our possession, which was fed entirely upon canary seed, by successive moults turned completely black. Pied birds with beautiful pink breasts have several times been taken, and one was once caught that was almost entirely white, but it soon died.

The Wild Duck.

WILD DUCK (MALE)
($\frac{1}{8}$ Scale.)

THE WILD DUCK.

Anas boschas.



THIS very handsome bird, the ancestor of most of our varieties of domestic ducks, may be said to be common to all parts of the continent of Europe. It is found as far east as Japan, and as far west as the United States; in fact, it may fairly be considered indigenous to the larger part of the northern hemisphere.

If the accounts of some of our earlier naturalists can be relied upon, the Wild Duck was formerly much more numerous in our own country than at the present time, the large numbers exhibited every winter in our shops and markets being obtained from the vast flocks that visit us from high northern latitudes, while but comparatively few pairs remain with us through the summer months.

Enormous numbers of Wild Ducks are taken every year in the fen countries by means of tunnel-nets, decoy-ponds, and dogs trained for the purpose. Indeed, so profitable an undertaking is this that Pennant records an instance where, in only one season, thirty-one thousand two hundred ducks, including Teals and Wigeons, were sold in London as the proceeds of ten Lincolnshire decoys.

The Wild Duck breeds early in the season, and the birds probably remain paired through the whole of the year. The nest is generally placed upon the ground, and is built of grass, lined with down and intermixed with down and feathers; sometimes a spot close to the edge of a lake or river is selected for breeding purposes, and at other times the birds choose a locality entirely removed from the water.

As regards its young, the Wild Duck exhibits great attention and anxiety; and if they are in any way threatened with danger, the parent becomes extremely excited, and resorts to numerous manœuvres to secure the safety of the family.

The young birds, which are known as "Flappers," are supposed to select their mates before the completion of the first year.

The eggs are of a greenish-white colour, and rather more than two inches in length, and sometimes number fourteen or fifteen.

The Drake leaves his mate directly she commences to hatch her eggs, and then undergoes, in common with many other male birds of the Duck family, one of the strangest transformations known to naturalists.

The plumage of the Drake is, up to this time, ex-

ceedingly handsome. The bill is yellowish-green; the irides hazel; the head and upper part of the neck a rich glossy green, with a ring of white; the lower part of the neck and the back a grayish chestnut-brown; the rump and upper tail-coverts bluish-black; the middle tail-feathers velvet-black, and curled upwards; front and sides of the neck rich dark chestnut; breast, belly, vent, grayish-white; under tail-coverts velvet-black; legs, orange-yellow. As already mentioned, a wonderful change takes place in the appearance of the Drake at the time of breeding. First, the back and breast change colour, then the curled feathers are lost, the splendid plumage of the head and neck becomes dull and gray, and about the first week in July all the handsome markings have disappeared, and the bird has assumed the dull brown colour of the female. This extraordinary change, however, lasts only for a couple of months, and by the first week in October the Drake has discarded his sad-coloured garb, and once more appears in all the beauty of his original plumage.

The flight of the Wild Duck is strong and rapid; the birds generally fly in a long irregular slanting line, with their necks fully extended. When only short journeys are performed, they commonly follow the course of water or low wet grounds, flying in a confused mass near the ground. Broad reedy sheets of water, ponds, lakes, rivers, streams, ditches, and watery districts generally, are the favourite resorts of the bird; but a considerable number of Wild Ducks may always be found upon the sea-coast during winter, and especially when severe frosts have closed up their favourite resorts.

The food of the Wild Duck is principally made up of grain, worms, slugs, small fish, land and water insects,

and occasionally the leaves of various plants. They feed during the principal part of the day in large flocks, but as evening approaches they set up a loud clamorous gabbling, the females being by far the noisiest. They then take wing in separate parties, and return in a similar way soon after dawn the following morning.

The Misal Thrush.

MISSEL THRUSH.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE MISSEL THRUSH.

Turdus viscivorus.
Merula viscivora.

PERHAPS more commonly known as the Storm-thrush, Storm-cock, or Holm-thrush, this handsome songster is met with in all parts of England. In the south of Scotland it is frequently seen, but towards the higher parts of that country it is rarer, and in the extreme north it is not known. It is common in Ireland, and also in most European countries, with the exception of Holland, where it is very seldom met with. The Missel Thrush is the largest of the British species, and is a bold, handsome bird, quarrelsome and pugnacious amongst other birds, and by no means pacific towards its own kindred and tribe.

In cold weather the birds assemble in flocks of various dimensions, some containing not more than from twelve to twenty or thirty birds, and others as many as sixty or seventy. They are good eating, and when the frost and snow is protracted enough to interfere with ordinary agricultural pursuits, such flocks are eagerly sought after by rustic gunners and embryo sportsmen.

When congregated in the manner above mentioned, the birds fly in a loose irregular body, and when they alight, disperse at once over the ground, and commence running and hopping about in search of food with great nimbleness and activity.

Considerable wariness is displayed by them at all times, but when feeding together in large numbers one or more of the party are usually on the look-out for danger, and if it should approach too closely, a warning note is uttered, and the entire flock seek safety in flight.

The ordinary note of the Missel Thrush is a harsh, unpleasant scream frequently repeated, and this is generally uttered when the bird is angry, alarmed, or engaged in some altercation. The song, although sweet, is not of a very first-class description, being monotonous, but it is loud, and well sustained for three or four minutes at a time, and is heard when the rough blasts have effectually silenced the vocal efforts of every other feathered warbler of the grove. Perched on the topmost and swaying branch of some tall tree, the Missel Thrush sings in the most dauntless and defiant manner, and, as a well-known writer happily expresses it, though "other birds retire with bated breath to the shelter of the grove or the humble hedge, he braves the tempest out, and sings his song with Æolus himself."

In the spring the Missel Thrush discontinues his gregarious habits, and after choosing a mate, becomes less distrustful, and frequents woods, gardens, and orchards. The food of the bird comprises the berries of the mountain ash, service tree, yew, juniper, holly, ivy, hips and haws, grain, seeds of various kinds, caterpillars, beetles and other insects, worms, slugs, and snails. The ancients had an erroneous idea that this bird was a sort of foster-parent to the mistletoe, which they imagined would not vegetate unless the berries had first passed through its body.

The nest is somewhat loosely made of twigs, small sticks, hay, straw, grasses, leaves, wool, and moss; it is compacted by a free use of mud mixed with fibrous roots and grass, and lined with finer grasses and moss. It is placed generally in the forks of trees, and the eggs, four to five in number, are laid in April: they are of a greenish or reddish-white, and spotted irregularly with reddish-brown or purple; they vary much in size and colour.

The male Missel Thrush ceases to sing at the commencement of hatching, and does not repeat his song until the next spring, unless he should lose his mate or his nest, when his vocal efforts are renewed.

The length of the male is eleven inches and a-half. The bill is dark brown; the upper mandible yellow at its base, from which a cream-coloured streak goes over the eye; iris dark brown. Head on the side yellowish-white; on the crown, neck, nape, greyish olive-brown; chin, throat and breast, pale yellowish-white, each feather tipped with black; the throat faintly so; the spots on the upper part are triangular; on the middle and sides oblong black, greyish olive-brown, lighter on the lower part. Underneath, the wings are grey, but the upper parts are deep

greyish-brown with a lighter edge, the greater and lesser under wing-coverts are greyish-white, very plainly perceptible during flight; the tail is rather long and slightly rounded, greyish-brown, faintly edged with yellowish-brown; under coverts are grey; legs and toes pale reddish-brown; claws brownish-black. The plumage towards the end of the summer becomes worn and faded; the moulting is completed by the end of October. The female is quite as large as the male, but paler in colour. The young differ from the adults in plumage; the chin is white, and the head and crown is pale brown, with a white spot in each feather; the back is also of a pale brown, with a greyish-yellow mark in each feather; the wings are brown, with the feathers edged with pale buff. Occasionally white and pied varieties are met with.

The Redpoll.

REDPOLLS (MALE AND FEMALE).

($\frac{7}{8}$ Scale.)

THE REDPOLL.

Fringilla linaria—LINNÆUS.

THIS bird, named by McGillivray *Linaria minor*, on account of its being the smallest of several kinds of Redpolls, is also known by the name of Redpoll, and is the smallest of our list of Finches. Undoubtedly, its name was derived from the deep crimson red upon the crown of the head, which is less by far upon the female. The adult male has, in addition, a handsome red breast, which in some is of a bright vermilion, deepening in others to a rosy red, which colour may also be found upon the rump. The female has a ground colour of grey, streaked with brown, and has merely the distinguishing red upon the head and this of lesser brilliancy.

The Redpoll is a native of Sweden and Norway, and some parts of Germany, where the birds breed. They are generally known upon the rest of the continent of Europe, and migrate to

this country, as does the Siskin, during the autumn, generally commencing to arrive about the second week in September; and the young male birds, even then, show signs of the red breast, having, at such time, a pink shade pervading those feathers.

These interesting little birds are gregarious, and therefore very susceptible to the allurements of the bird-catcher's call-bird. During the winter they feed upon the seeds of the alder and birch trees, and upon buttonweed and such-like seeds. In districts where such food abounds, Redpolls are very plentiful, and, if disturbed, will rise almost simultaneously with a musical sort of chattering twitter, and settle upon the nearest tree. They are, however, very tame and approachable; and even if a stone be thrown at them will, if compatible with any degree of safety, return to the same tree. The report of a gun, and the terrors of the rattling shot, cannot altogether quell this daring disposition. As alder trees generally grow near water, it is in such localities that the Redpoll is most frequently found, and then, too, in considerable numbers, sometimes as many as two or three hundred congregating together. Waste lands or commons are also much frequented by this enterprising little bird.

Many instances have been quoted of Redpolls breeding in this country. Morris mentions a nest found at Shanklin Chine; Selby asserts that he found a nest in the North of England; and another pair were, during the year 1882, found breeding near Oxford, in which year also several nests were found in Norfolk. A pair once bred in our garden in an elder bush about six feet high; but this pair were found to be escaped birds, as possibly may have been those instanced above, though it cannot be denied

that birds delayed in migration might make up their minds to colonise in this country. Still, the comparative scarcity of such instances would go to refute such a supposition, and the "escaped bird" theory would probably be the more correct.

The nest so found by us near Brighton was small, but prettily built, with a foundation of twigs, dry grass, stalks, and moss, intermingled with the down of the catkin of the willow, which forms a beautifully soft lining; and this description tallies to a great extent with that of Mr. Selby.

About April, or the beginning of May, Redpolls commence their return migration, which is evidently of an erratic nature, as some of the birds are in full plumage as regards the red breast, whilst the general plumage is lighter, which would almost lead us to suppose that these birds had wintered in Southern Europe; but being of a gregarious nature, it is very difficult to distinguish the arrival of these fortunate strangers. Certain it seems that with age the distinguishing colour deepens and also brightens, although this rule is completely reversed if the bird be kept in captivity, as in that case the red entirely disappears from the breast and rump, and in process of time also from the head, its place being taken there by a greenish gold.

Although so small, the Redpoll is a very hardy bird, and from its extreme docility is a particular pet, especially with children. Being so plentiful, the price is extremely small; therefore it is that, despite the very meagre song of the Redpoll, which is limited to two notes and a call-note, generally represented by "pe-weet," often repeated, this little bird may be found in every bird-seller's shop, and generally receives a home in every aviary. But especially

is the Redpoll kept by lovers of birds, from the fact that its docility will allow it to be taught many interesting tricks. Besides eating from the feeder's hand, it will learn to draw up water in a glass cup or bucket from the well arranged in cages for the purpose, or open the lid of the seed-box, or, again, draw each receptacle up an inclined plane, together with other amusing tricks, which may be easily taught by patient owners.

The Redbacked Shrike.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

(½ Scale.)

THE RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

Lanius colluris.

VARIOUSLY known in different localities as the "Cheeter," "Flusher," "Butcher-bird," "Jack Baker," and "Whiskey John," this bird is the commonest and best known of the British Shrikes.

The principal characteristics of the family to which the Shrike belongs may be briefly described as follows. The bill is of moderate length, broad at the base and hooked at the tip; there is a notch or indentation in the mandibles; the nostrils are situated laterally, and are surrounded with bristles, which are found at the base of the bill as well; the wings are elongated, and the tail is long and rounded at the end.

The Red-backed Shrike is one of our migratory birds, coming to us from the south,

and remaining with us from May until September or October. It is more frequently met with in the southern counties of England than in the north. Sussex, Essex, Middlesex, Suffolk, Kent, and Dorsetshire may be mentioned as localities where the bird is perhaps seen in the greatest abundance. Although nowhere a common bird, it is met with in Wales, but very rarely in Scotland or Ireland.

The name "Butcher-bird," by which the Red-backed Shrike is generally known, is certainly not a very enticing title, but the peculiar habits which have given rise to the appellation undoubtedly justify the selection, the bird literally converting the top of some hedgerow or thorn-bush which it frequents, into a sort of shambles, impaling beetles and other small specimens of animated nature upon which it feeds, upon the sharp thorns. This remarkable habit of the Red-backed Shrike has given rise to considerable difference of opinion amongst naturalists as to the motive which induces the bird to act in so strange and unusual a way. Many have thought that it was merely a considerate way which the male had in providing an easy supply of food for his mate during the period of incubation, whilst others aver that the idea of providing against any unlooked-for failure in the provision market must be the secret of the bird's behaviour. Our own opinion is that it is merely one of those freaks or eccentricities which we so commonly find in connection with birds, and which, like the pilfering propensity of the Pie family, and the love of mischief in others, cannot be traced to, or connected with, any actual necessity or advantage.

The Red-backed Shrike is a somewhat indiscriminate feeder, beetles of various sorts being most highly prized,

but in the absence of these, it feeds upon grasshoppers, dragon-flies, lizards, small birds, and mice. The principal haunts of the Shrike are tall hedgerows, thorn-bushes, and coppices; it is also partial to quarries, and deserted chalk-pits, and may frequently be seen perched on some rail, post, gate, or prominent bough of a tree, and as often as anywhere on the telegraph wires of a railway. From these points of vantage it keeps a good look-out for anything likely to afford a meal, and may be noticed occasionally darting off upon some unlucky victim, which it either devours or impales, and again resumes its watchful position. It is a mistake to suppose that the prey is always impaled before being eaten.

The Red-backed Shrike builds rather a large nest, which may very easily be discovered, as it is commonly placed in some bush or hedge without any attempt at concealment. The nest is made of dried grass, twigs, or roots, moss and wool, and lined with some finer roots and stalks. Five or six eggs are laid, of a pale reddish-white spotted with different shades of brownish-red. In most cases there is a well-defined band of spots around the larger end. The eggs of this bird vary considerably in appearance, some being quite greyish in tint and others pinkish and greenish-white.

The length of the male bird is about seven-and-a-half inches; the bill, which is hooked at the end and notched, is of a bright black colour, and a black stripe runs from the end to the nape of the neck. The forehead is black; head, bluish-grey; chin, whitish; throat, white; breast, a pale yellowish-pink; back, bluish-grey on the lower part and reddish-brown on the upper. The tail is long and extends beyond the wings; there are two black feathers in the centre, all the rest are white at the base and tipped with

white; the upper tail-coverts are bluish-grey, lower tail-coverts, white; legs are long and slender, and, like the toes and claws, are black.

The female differs considerably in plumage from her mate, and is by no means of so striking an appearance, being of a rusty brown colour on the upper part of the body and greyish-white underneath.

The young birds bear a general resemblance to the female, and do not gain the above adult plumage until the second moult, which takes place about the following January.

The Thoughts.

CHOUGH.
(¼ Scale.)

THE CHOUGH.

Corvus graculus.
Fregilus ,,

THE Chough, or, as it is more commonly called, the Cornish Chough, is quite a traditional bird, and is alluded to by some very celebrated writers both in poetry and prose. Shakespeare speaks of it in a description of the cliff of Dover; and the fine old glee commencing, "The Chough and Crow to roost are gone," must be thoroughly familiar to every one.

These interesting birds were at one time far more frequently met with than they are in the present day, and it is to be regretted that in many localities once noted for their presence they are now either totally unknown, or seen but at increasing intervals. The Chough rejoices in a variety of names, and is variously spoken

of as the Red-legged Crow, Killigrew, Hermit Crow, Cliff Daw, Gesner's Wood Crow, and other titles too numerous to particularise.

The Chough, although ranked amongst the Corvidæ, is not a true crow, but seems to be a sort of connecting link between the Crow and the Pastors. It is distinguished from the crow family by the form of the beak, which is longer than the head, and is arched and pointed. Its flight is something like that of the rook, but more rapid, and its movements when on the ground are more lively and graceful. The note is shrill, but not unpleasant, and may be said to resemble the words "creea, creea"; sometimes it utters a quick chattering noise like a starling.

Amongst the places where the Chough is occasionally seen, and where at one time it was comparatively common, may be mentioned Cornwall, Devonshire, the Isle of Man, Galloway, St. Abb's Head, the Wiltshire Downs, Pembrokeshire, Flintshire, the Isle of Anglesea, and many parts of the Irish coast.

Cornwall was formerly very noted for these birds, as one of their best known names (Cornish Chough) clearly indicates.

The Chough is partial to the sea-shore and the banks of large tidal rivers, near their junction with the sea. Like the Jackdaw, these birds have a strong liking for isolated buildings, and when not breeding in the cliffs, they usually select some old church tower or ruined castle for their breeding places. Their food is principally made up of insects, grubs, small crustacea, grains, berries, and occasionally carrion; freshly-ploughed land is also frequently visited for the worms and beetles that may be obtained there. In feeding on small insects, the food is

swallowed entire, but when a large beetle or cockchafer is secured the bird holds it in the feet, and pecks at it until it is devoured. The Chough is oftener seen on the sea-shore than anywhere else, where it frequents the highest cliffs and rocks, walking over them with great ease and confidence, its toes and claws being admirably adapted for this purpose. The disposition of the Chough is rather a curious combination: it is extremely inquisitive and thievish, yet very wary, cautious, and shy. Judging from the accounts of those persons who have kept and watched them, their strong inquisitiveness and instinctive caution are in a perpetual state of opposition, the undecided actions of the birds being consequently at times almost ludicrous.

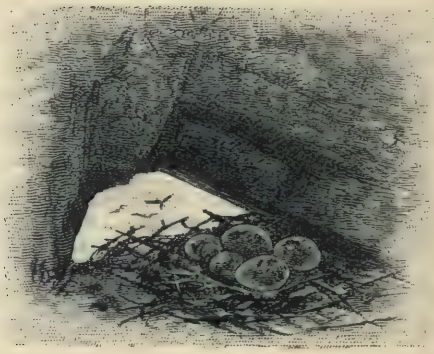
As already hinted, old towers, church steeples, and the holes in cliffs are the spots generally selected by the Chough in which to build its nest. It is composed of sticks, and lined with wool and hair. The eggs are four or five in number, of a pale yellowish-white colour, spotted with ash grey and light brown, and about one-and-a-half inch in length. The parents are very watchful in guarding their nest from intruders.

The length of the Chough is sixteen or seventeen inches; it is of an uniform black colour, with a glossy bluish tinge; the iris has two circles, the inner one red, the outer blue; the beak is of a brilliant red, yellow in the inside, and about two inches long; the wings reach nearly to the end of the tail, and have a more shining lustre than the rest of the plumage. In both sexes the legs are red, and the claws black and strongly hooked.

The Chough is said to be found in France, Spain, Switzerland, and Crete, and may be met with in Egypt

and some parts of Asia. It is not known, or at least not common, in Northern Europe.

Some time ago a pair of these birds was exhibited for two years running at the Crystal Palace Bird Show, and on both occasions took prizes. On inquiry we were informed that they are the most knowing and interesting birds that can be kept in confinement, but require a large cage, as they are of a restless disposition and will otherwise break their tails and wings.



The Gyr Falcon.

GYR FALCON.

(1/8 Scale)

THE GYR FALCON.

Falco gyrfalco.—LINNÆUS.

THE Gyr Falcon, or Jer Falcon, stands at the head of the Falconidæ, and is one of the handsomest and boldest of our British birds; indeed, the family to which it belongs may be safely described as the most fully developed in strength, daring, symmetry, and powers of flight of all the feathered tribes. We learn that in the palmy days of English falconry this bird was imported from Norway for the purposes of sport; and great care, patience, and attention were bestowed on its training. But these times have long since passed away; the bird itself, as far as this country is concerned, is growing rarer and more difficult to obtain, and seems to be yielding to that gradual extinction which has long since overtaken the sport with which it

was once associated. Some attempts have very lately been made to revive the sport of falconry upon Salisbury Plain; but the modern spirit is too strongly against all such proceedings to hold out much prospect of success.

In Great Britain the Gyr Falcon is found in the north of Scotland and in the Shetland and Orkney islands. Specimens are occasionally found further south, and a very fine specimen was shot near Brighton in 1884; but its principal haunts are in the wild, rocky parts of Iceland, Greenland, Lapland, Russia, Sweden, and Siberia, and also in the parallel portions of America and Northern Asia.

The flight of this bird is remarkable for its rapidity, and the apparent ease with which it is sustained. When pursuing its prey, it rises high in the air above its victim, and then suddenly swoops down upon it with unerring aim and force. Should, however, the first attack be unsuccessful, the bird passes on, rises again in the air, and again repeats the swoop.

The food of the Gyr Falcon is invariably captured alive, and consists of the smaller animals and larger birds. It is a very unscrupulous feeder; and amongst the most common articles of its diet may be mentioned rabbits, young hares, grouse, partridges, ptarmigan, curlews, whimbrels, ducks, plovers, and numerous other land and water birds.

Some high inaccessible cliff or crevice in a rock, either on the sea-coast or near some inland lake, is the spot usually selected as a nesting place. The nest is built of sticks and roots, and lined with wool, moss, or seaweed. Two or three eggs are generally laid: they are of a light yellowish-

brown, dotted with rusty red, and occasional patches of the same colour; sometimes they are dull white, and are mottled all over with pale reddish-brown.

During incubation, and until the young birds are capable of taking care of themselves, the parents are particularly fierce, and exhibit great intrepidity in defending their home and progeny from intruders. During the period that the young are dependent upon their parents, the old birds are ceaseless in their search for food, and the number of victims secured at such a time by a pair of these active hunters is stated to be well-nigh incredible.

Like other birds of the same order, the female is larger than the male, and fiercer and more fearless than her mate.

The length of the male Gyr Falcon is about twenty-two or twenty-four inches. The beak is short, but strong and much hooked; the head, crown, and neck are pure white, or white with a few brownish-black spots or streaks; the nape, chin, and breast white, or slightly spotted or lined, like the head and neck; back more or less spotted and mottled with blackish-brown. The wings are long and powerful, reaching to within four inches from the end of the tail, and are similarly marked to the back, the under coverts being pure white. The tail is long and rounded at the end; in some specimens it is pure white, and in others barred with blackish-brown; the tail-coverts are white. The legs are bright yellow (bluish-grey in the young bird), and are short, stout, and feathered half-way down, the remainder, as well as the toes, are covered with scales; the claws are black and powerful, the hinder one being larger than the others.

The plumage of the female has a general resemblance

to that of the male, but the markings on the breast and sides are broader.

In young birds all the upper parts are of a brown ash colour, the feathers being edged with white; a dark streak runs down each side of the throat from the corners of the beak; the under parts are brown, gradually becoming white, with large brown spots; the tail is barred with light brown. When the Gyr Falcon attains its full age, the whole plumage is white, or nearly so.

The young birds soon after they are hatched are covered with down of a dirty white colour, which does not come off, but their feathers grow through it.

Although the places before enumerated are the ordinary resorts of this handsome bird, it has been shot in various parts of Great Britain and Ireland, but these instances are rare in the extreme.

The Buffon.

PUFFIN.

(¼ Scale.)

THE PUFFIN.

Fratercula arctica.

THE Puffin, or, as it is sometimes called, the Sea Parrot and Coulterneb, is certainly one of the most singular-looking birds that visit the sea-coast of Great Britain; and it may safely be affirmed that its disposition, habits, and general characteristics are quite as remarkable as its appearance. The bill, which is perhaps the most striking peculiarity, is shorter than the head: its height is greater than its length; both mandibles are curved towards the point, and provided with sharp cutting edges; it is covered with a loose sheath very curiously furrowed on the sides and variously coloured, which is shed at the end of the breeding season. The basal ridge is yellow, then there is a space of bluish-grey,

and then three grooves and four ridges of orange; the skin at the gape is naked and yellow; the iris is grey; the ear-coverts are dirty white, and so are the cheeks and chin; while the forehead, crown, back of head, the collar round the neck, the wings, back, and tail are black. The under parts of the body are entirely white. The legs and toes are orange colour, the latter being webbed; the claws are curved, and the wings small, and tail short. When standing, the Puffin rests upon the whole of the leg and foot from the heel downwards, and this arrangement naturally produces, when the bird is walking, a waddling sort of gait, which is ungraceful in the extreme. The length of the Puffin is about twelve inches, and there is no apparent difference in the appearance of the different sexes.

This bird is gregarious and migratory. It arrives on our coasts generally about the beginning of April, and remains with us until the end of August or early in September, congregating in enormous numbers, or colonies, in many well-known localities. It is purely a sea-bird, and is therefore to be found principally on cliffs and high rocks, or upon the flat grassy table-land found frequently upon their summits. The localities most commonly visited by Puffins are the Isle of Man, the coast of Anglesey, the Scilly Islands, some parts of the Isle of Wight, the Fern Islands, Puffin Island in the Firth of Forth, and many of the Scottish isles.

The process of nest-building is not an occupation upon which the Puffin spends either time or trouble, as it generally breeds in a burrow (excavated by itself or purloined from a rabbit), or else the egg is deposited in a crevice on the perpendicular front of a cliff. The burrow

of the rabbit is very frequently used as a domicile by this bird, whose powerful beak and aggressive disposition speedily enable it to dispossess the lawful owner of his retreat. Only one egg is laid: it is of a white colour, but soon becomes dirty and discoloured from contact with the bare earth on which it rests, the parent birds making not the least attempt to increase the comfort of their habitation. In places where there are no rabbits to eject, the Puffin, according to some writers, will dig a hole in the earth, and the birds become so absorbed in their occupation that they take no notice of intruders, and will at times allow themselves to be captured rather than discontinue their labours. These burrows are usually about three feet in depth; they frequently run in a curving direction, and at times are provided with two entrances.

The young Puffins are, when first hatched, covered with a long dark down, and at that time they are very peculiar-looking; this down does not come off, but the feathers grow through it. Like other birds of the same family, they are generally very fat.

The Puffin feeds upon small fish, crustacea, and marine insects. The flight, considering its wings, is rapid, and both in swimming and diving its capabilities are thoroughly well developed.

Though fond of the open sea this bird must, to speak fairly, be called a "fair-weather sailor" only, as directly the weather becomes wet and stormy it beats a retreat to *terra firma*, and sits and dozes about on the rocks in large numbers, and in the most apathetic manner imaginable. Indeed, so dull and insensible to danger are these birds at such times, that almost any number may be taken by merely dropping horsehair nooses over them. It is stated

that large quantities are taken in this way in some of the Scottish islands, where a remunerative price is obtained for their feathers.

The Puffin is well known in various parts of Scandinavia, Iceland, the Faröe Islands, and other northern latitudes, and is met with on some parts of the coasts of Holland and France.

This bird is seldom seen off the Sussex coast, but after a heavy southerly gale specimens are often washed ashore.

The Garden Warbler.

GARDEN WARBLER.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE GARDEN WARBLER.

Sylvia hortensis.—LATHAM.

THIS active little visitor to our gardens and orchards may be regarded quite as a typical bird of its tribe. It belongs to the *Sylviadæ*, whose principal distinguishing feature is the bill, which is of moderate length, slender make, and tapers from a broad base to the extremity; it is slightly curved, and the nostrils at the base are placed in a membraneous groove, having the openings uncovered. The Garden Warbler is a songster of no common merit, its notes being rich, full, varied, and melodious; and the song is not unfrequently sustained for nearly half-an-hour at a time. Perhaps the Garden Warbler is scarcely so accomplished a vocalist as the Blackcap, but on the other hand some of its notes are superior, and quite

equal in depth and sweetness to those of the Nightingale or the Blackbird.

The Garden Warbler, although not so shy as some birds, is yet very unobtrusive and retiring in its habits, and seems quite happy and contented if allowed to pursue its course unnoticed and unmolested; frequently its sweetest song is poured forth from the branches of some bush, or the shadier recesses of some thickly-grown hedge.

The food of this bird is composed to a large extent of caterpillars, insects and their larvæ, and chrysalides; but when the season is sufficiently advanced the garden warbler betrays a most noticeable partiality for a more luscious diet, and feeds freely upon currants, raspberries, and the berries of the elder, barberry, ivy, and green figs. It is, indeed, called in some places the Fig Bird.

The actions of the bird are quick and continuous; it moves about the branches of a tree or bush with rapidity and grace, and when on the ground advances quickly by a series of vigorous hops. It is averse to being very closely watched, and if it notices an observer, its song is suspended at once, or its repast is left unfinished, and the bird seeks the shelter of the nearest cover. The flight is short and rapid.

The nest of the Garden Warbler is generally built of grasses or straws, sometimes mixed with moss, and lined with wool, horsehair, or the finer fibres of plants; usually it is placed a few feet from the ground in the branches of a thorn or other bush, but at other times the nest may be found in coarse grasses, and the herbage of taller wild plants. Frequently the nest is built in close proximity to some grotto or garden tool-shed.

The eggs number four or five, and are of a dull

yellowish-grey colour, blotched and blotted with markings of dark purplish-brown.

The Garden Warbler is migratory, arriving in this country about the beginning of May, and taking its departure in August or September, though sometimes specimens are taken later. It is found pretty generally throughout Europe. In our own country it is rarely seen in Cornwall, and in Derbyshire it is sparingly distributed, but in most of the other counties it is a tolerably well-known bird. In Ireland it is extremely rare. Like the Blackcap and Nightingale, on their arrival in this country the birds fly straight to their last year's nesting-place, the males preceding the females by about a week; and it is at this time that their song is heard to perfection. On their return-migration they generally stay for a few days in any garden where they can find any soft-skinned fruit. We have many times seen more than a dozen in a small garden, feeding on the currants or raspberries, which they swallow whole. When disturbed they fly off individually, but generally only to the next bush or some neighbouring trees. At this time of year they are very tame, and will come within a few yards, and it is almost impossible to keep them from the fruit, of which they consume a great deal.

The length of this pretty little songster is about six inches. The bill is dusky-brown, the base and edges of the lower mandible light brown, the inside of the mouth being a reddish-pink; the iris is dark brown, with a small whitish mark over and in front of the eye; the head is pale brown on the sides; the crown, nape, and back of the neck is a light greyish-brown, with a faint olive tinge; the chin and throat are yellowish-white; the lower part of the

throat, and upper part of the breast and sides are tinged with reddish-brown; the remainder yellowish-white. The wings are broad and rather pointed, primaries, secondaries, and tertiaries are light dusky brown, margined with olive; greater and lesser under wing-coverts of a fine buff yellow; tail is straight and dusky brown; under tail-coverts are pale greyish-brown with white margins; toes and claws greyish-brown. The female is very much like the male in plumage and size, but is lighter on the upper parts, while the lower parts are more uniformly greyish-brown.

The young birds generally resemble their parents, but the space about the eye is greyish-white, the breast has more of a yellow tinge, and the back is of a riches yellowish-brown.

The Yellow Hammer.

or.

Yellow Bunting.

YELLOW-HAMMER.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE YELLOW-HAMMER.

Emberiza citrinella.

PLENTIFULLY distributed throughout nearly every part of Great Britain, the Yellow-Hammer is one of the commonest and best known of our familiar wild birds; indeed, in the summer months almost every hedgerow or patch of furze and gorse may be relied upon to furnish a haunt for this handsome little bird.

Like many other species of our feathered friends, the Yellow-Hammer rejoices in a variety of local names, and is variously known as the Yellow Bunting, Yellow Yowley, Goldie, Yeldrock, Yoit, and other titles too numerous to mention.

The Yellow-Hammer is found plentifully on the European continent, especially in the more central parts, the

extreme north and south being apparently not so congenial to its taste.

These birds are of sociable habits (although their intercourse is perpetually interrupted by quarrels), and in winter they associate in flocks with other small birds, such as greenfinches, chaffinches &c., which frequent farm-yards and stubble fields in search of food.

The Yellow-Hammer often roosts on the ground, at any rate in the summer, severe weather only compelling it to take shelter in bushes, hedgerows, and similarly protected localities.

About the middle of April the flocks disperse, and the Yellow-Hammer seeks a mate and turns its attention to family duties. Generally the nest is placed near the ground on a bank, and frequently in a tuft of coarse grass or herbage. It is built of moss, fine fibrous roots, and small twigs, and neatly lined with horse-hair. Four or five eggs are laid, of a pale purplish-white colour, streaked, spotted and blotched with dark reddish-brown; occasionally the eggs may be found of a more reddish tint, with dark brown streaks and blotches; they also vary considerably in size.

The young make their appearance about the beginning of June, and are most carefully attended to by their parents, the male bird being especially noticeable for the assiduity and anxiety he evinces for the comfort of his mate and progeny.

The food principally consists of grain, seeds of various sorts, and insects; upon the latter it feeds its young almost entirely. The first-mentioned item being its favourite diet, it is naturally not regarded by farmers with any great degree of complacency or friendliness.

The flight of the Yellow-Hammer is rapid, strong, and undulating; the bird seems to alight unexpectedly, and may be noticed to display the tail, at such times, with a quick jerky movement.

The Yellow-Hammer has a somewhat peculiar way of leaping when feeding on *terra firma*, the bird's breast at the time being close, or very nearly so, to the ground; when perched, the attitude is "listless, the tail being deflected for some time."

The note is one of the first heard in the spring, and is often to be detected as early as February; it consists of two or three chirps, which sound like "Chit-chit" followed by a prolonged and harsh "chirr-r-r." In Sussex the Yellow-Hammer's song is popularly supposed to resemble the words "Bit o' bread and no chee-e-e-se." The song is usually uttered when the bird is on the top of some hedge or the spray of a bush.

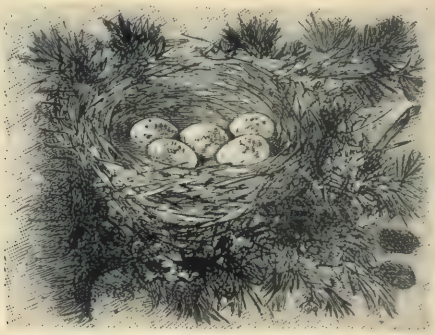
Should a flock be disturbed, the entire party takes refuge in some neighbouring trees or bushes, where a loud twittering is set up, which is joined in more or less by all the members of the party. If left to themselves, the birds will shortly leave the trees in ones and twos, and reassemble in a flock as before.

The Yellow-Hammer varies in plumage to a considerable extent, some birds being much more yellow than others, while the red of the breast and lower part of the back is more or less deep in some than in others. The bill is of a bluish horn-colour, the upper part tinged with brown; the iris is dark brown, and about the base of the bill there are short bristles. On the crown and sides the head is bright yellow, with a few streaks of dusky black and olive, frequently forming a line on each side from the forehead over

the eye to the back of the head. Chin, throat, and breast bright yellow, with streaks at the sides of reddish-brown and olive. The back is bright reddish-brown, with tinges of yellowish-green; the lower part is a reddish-brown. The tail is slightly forked, of a dusky black colour, with some white markings on the outside feathers, which are very perceptible in flight. Legs, toes, and claws are a light yellowish-brown, with a reddish tinge.

As a rule, the female is altogether duller in colour than her mate, and the tail is lighter, and has a smaller proportion of white on the outside feathers.

When first fledged, the young bird is of a dull yellowish-brown, the brighter portions of the plumage not being attained until the bird is fully grown.



The Black-Headed Gull.

BLACK-HEADED GULL.

(¼ Scale.)

THE BLACK-HEADED GULL.

Larus ridibundus—PENNANT.

THIS interesting and attractive bird, in addition to its ordinary appellation, is also known by the names of the Red-legged Gull and Laughing Gull, and is found in large numbers on nearly all the low marshy coasts of England. Its note is a hoarse sort of cry or cackle, which, when rapidly repeated, bears some sort of resemblance to a laugh, hence the name last enumerated. It belongs to the genus *Larus*, a marine web-footed species distributed pretty generally over all portions of the globe.

The Black-headed Gull may be easily distinguished from the rest of the Gull family by its size, and the very plainly-marked hood of dark-coloured feathers which

covers the head in summer; it is common to all parts of our coasts during the colder months of the year, but as soon as the spring advances it resorts to the flat marshy places for the purpose of hatching its young, the birds returning to the same localities year after year with undeviating regularity.

Certain parts of Kent and Essex near the mouth of the Thames are particularly noted for these Gulls, and another remarkable breeding-place is Scoulton Mere, in Norfolk. At this last-mentioned spot there is a large boggy island where these birds resort in large numbers, and of it it is said that they have bred there regularly for upwards of 300 years.

The Black-headed Gulls begin to congregate in February and March; the eggs are laid in May; these are usually three in number, but vary very much in size and colour. The general length is two inches; they are of a yellowish-greeny brown, with spots of two shades of dark brown. So much do the eggs vary, however, that they are not unfrequently found much smaller than the dimensions above quoted, of a pale blue colour, and without spots of any kind.

The nests are built entirely of the tops of sedge or reeds; they are loosely put together, and are made in the rushes and coarse grass of the marshes. If the first eggs are interfered with the bird will lay a second, and even a third lot, but the eggs that are subsequently produced are generally much smaller than the first.

As soon as the young birds are hatched they creep about the reeds until they can fly, and if alarmed take to the water at once. The parents exhibit great solicitude for their progeny, and endeavour by their screams and

menacing actions to frighten intruders away from their retreat. The birds, both old and young, remain about the neighbouring fields and meadows until their departure for the sea-shore, and when that takes place they do not return until the succeeding spring.

Like all Gulls, the Black-headed Gull is a capital swimmer, and it is very interesting to watch them on the sea just raising themselves high enough to escape a broken wave, and then settling on the water as before. When in search of food they follow one another with some regularity.

The food of the Black-headed Gull consists of small fishes, insects, worms and grubs. Of the latter they consume large quantities; they are frequently seen where ploughing is going on, and exhibit as much partiality for a newly-turned furrow as is shown by the rook or any inland bird; but at other times their tastes are much coarser, and they may be seen quarrelling and screaming on the water over some unsavoury morsel that may possibly have found its way from some drain or sewer. According to Yarrell, the eggs of these birds (which are sold in large quantities for culinary purposes) resemble in flavour the egg of the duck, but are of inferior quality.

The adult plumage of the Black-headed Gull is decidedly out of the common; the beak, legs, and feet are a bright vermilion; the eyelids orange, and the irides hazel; the head and upper part of the neck and throat dark brown, darkest when first assumed, and gradually growing lighter as the autumn approaches; the back and sides of the neck pure white; back, French grey; wings grey, margined with black; tail white, and the whole of the under part of the body pure white. The length of the bird is about

sixteen inches. The dark hood which distinguishes this bird is assumed in the spring, and the change in colour is effected rapidly. The young birds have the head marked with greyish-brown, the tail is white, with a broad bar of black at the end, and the beak, legs, and feet are a yellowish-brown. In winter the plumage of the bird is subject to considerable alteration. In the adult Black-headed Gull the head is only slightly marked with a dusky patch by the ear coverts; the back and wings are a beautiful French grey, and the neck, breast, and all the under part of the body are pure white; feet, legs, and bill are red.

The Black-headed Gull is found plentifully in the Hebrides, and in Orkney and Shetland; they also breed in Sweden, Russia, and Siberia, and are very abundant in Holland. They visit the French coasts in winter, and have been seen in Switzerland, Genoa, Italy, and Germany. The flight, like most of the Gull tribe, is easy, strong, and buoyant.

The Common Bunting.

COMMON BUNTING.
(½ Scale.)

THE COMMON BUNTING.

Emberiza miliaria.

THE Bunting belongs to a very interesting group of the Passerine birds, one of the principal characteristics of the family being the bill, which is very strong and conical, the upper mandible having a strong knob on the palate, commonly called a tooth, and the sides of the mandibles bending inwards. The bird is about seven-and-a-half inches in length, and of a somewhat thick, bulky appearance. The plumage of the Bunting is varied and pleasing. The iris is dark brown; over the eye is a faint mark of pale yellowish-grey, which is continued in a curve down the cheek; the head, crown, and back of the neck are a light yellowish-brown, inclining to olive, and the centre of each feather is streaked with dark

brown; in front the feathers are tipped with a triangular spot of brownish-black, the spots being larger and darker on each side, where they form a line. The chin, throat and breast are dull white in summer, and in winter a yellowish-brown, marked with streaks or elongated spots of dark brown, which are much lengthened farther down the body. Close to the throat the spots of dark brown are much smaller and closer together than on the breast. The back is a pale yellowish-brown, with streaks of darker brown, and in the autumn it becomes more olive in colour. The wing-coverts are dark brown, broadly edged with a lighter brown. The tail is slightly forked, rather long, and dark brown, the edges of the feathers being lighter; the under tail-coverts are pale yellowish-brown; legs are pale yellowish or reddish-brown; toes dull yellow; claws deep brown. The female closely resembles the male, but the young birds are lighter than their parents, and the dark markings on the breast and throat are more lengthened.

This bird is tolerably common in most parts of Great Britain, but is found in certain localities in much greater numbers than in others. It is also known as the Bunting Lark, Clodbird, and Corn Bunting, the latter name being given to it from the strong partiality it evinces for this particular sort of food. As may be easily imagined, the Bunting is not a favourite bird with English farmers, who attribute to it—let us hope unjustly—an amount of dishonesty and mischief in the matter of corn-ricks that is certainly very derogatory to its character; and it is commonly said of the bird that it seems to consider that all collections of grain have been expressly stored for its own especial comfort and private requirements.

The flight of the Bunting is strong, but is somewhat laboured, and not particularly rapid; it consists of a series of undulating movements, and is accompanied with a whirring sound. When on the ground, it moves quickly by hopping; at night it roosts either on the ground in stubble, or on low hedgerows or bushes. Its note is uttered both when the bird is flying and when it is perched, and resembles the word "chuck" or "chit." This is repeated several times in a harsh, unmelodious key, and can be heard for some considerable distance. The bird is of an extremely quarrelsome disposition.

The Bunting generally commences its nest about the end of April; it is built either on the ground, in the middle of a field, or on a bank, or in coarse herbage close to the bottom of a hedge, and occasionally in a bush. The nest is composed of small fibrous roots, dried grass, or hay, and neatly lined with fine moss, wool, and hair. About four eggs is the usual number laid, and these are of a blunt oval shape, and of a whitish colour, tinged with greyish-red, sometimes pale purple, and irregularly spotted and blotched with marks of dark purplish-brown. In some instances the ground of the egg is almost white, but they vary considerably in colour, shape, and size.

In the spring and summer these birds are seen usually singly or in pairs, but in the cold weather they congregate not only with numbers of their own species, but also with various birds whose size, habits, and food correspond generally with their own.

The food of the Bunting consists of corn and other grain, seeds, insects, and grubs. It is generally in excellent condition, and is considered very good eating. Fields, particularly stubble, the enclosures of farms, where ricks

are numerous, and cultivated districts generally, are its favourite resorts, but it may be frequently observed "dusting" in the roadway, in the manner of sparrows and larks. It is also fond of washing itself. As already stated, it is tolerably well distributed through Great Britain, but is most numerously found in Sussex, Yorkshire, Shropshire, Cornwall, Norfolk, Suffolk, Lancashire, Cumberland, and Durham.

The Magpie.

MAGPIE.
(⅓ Scale.)

THE MAGPIE.

Corvus pica—Linnæus, Pennant, Bewick.

WE find among our familiar wild birds, perhaps, none more thoroughly familiar than the Magpie; yet it falls to the lot of few of those with whom it is a household name to see it wild. In fact, it is more as a household pet that people know the Magpie, and those who are only acquainted with the clipped or caged bird, that has probably been reared by hand from the nest, can have but a faint idea of his very handsome appearance, and little idea of the audacious pilferings (not to use a harder phrase) of this restless but interesting bird when wild. The habits of the Magpie in a natural state remain, however, even in confinement. It seems to be a part of the bird's existence to steal and hide. Most of us remember the nursery-tales of the "Basket of Eggs" and the "Maid and the Magpie,"

which have been the theme of several dramas and at least one opera. But it must not be thought that the Magpie's brains are wholly devoted to thieving, for, generally successful freebooter as he is, yet he also combines discretion with his audacity, and, consequently, in building a nest, having selected a partner in housekeeping, the pair will be found to choose the topmost branch of a tall tree, or the top of a tall thick hedgerow as its site; and bird-nesters can vouch for the general security of either. Twined around these forked branches, they construct a large nest with an outside foundation of sharp, thorny sticks and twigs interlaced, then lined with mud or earth, and again lined with fibrous roots and dry grasses; but over and above this is placed a dome-like structure, which serves as a covering from the bad weather, and also as a protection from enemies. It is said that the female sits with her head facing the aperture, so that a good escape may be made should danger threaten; but after climbing a tall tree it is difficult to determine that point.

Early in the spring-time, within her carefully appointed nest, the hen Magpie deposits from six to seven eggs, of a pale, dull, bluish-white, with spots of an ash-colour and greenish-brown distributed somewhat generally. The young are blessed with appetites of such a kind as to entail upon the parent birds an exceptional amount of labour in the effort to supply them with food. Whilst they are in the nest many of the surrounding happy homes of other birds are rifled of their young, and go towards supplying the Magpie's larder. Not only wild birds, but the innocent farm-yard chicken, young hares, rabbits, and other game are likewise laid under contribution. When other food fails (and the Magpie cannot expect always to

obtain such dainties as described) it will then descend to feed upon frogs, efts, beetles, cockchafers, carrion of all kinds, and even grain; in short, everything a Magpie can get, by fair means or foul, is held to be its proper prey.

In consequence of so many adverse opinions, the guns of the gamekeeper and farmer are ever pointed at the Magpie, but no doubt the bird fills its proper place in the general scheme of Nature, and might bring forward many good arguments as to its usefulness.

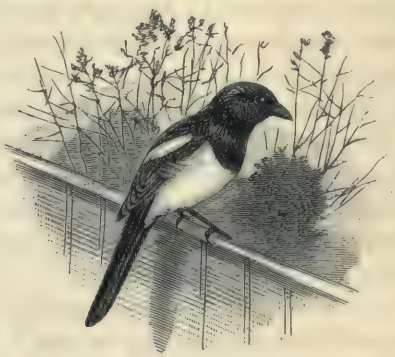
After leaving the nest, the young are generally to be found haunting the district of their nesting-place, and may be seen chattering to one another upon the confines of a small wood or copse, from whence a pair will start upon a foraging expedition to the next wood, followed at short intervals by the rest of the family. Their chattering garrulity is at once the signal for the inhabitants of the invaded wood to be "up in arms," and the excitement is consequently intense. A wood or woods upon the side of a hill or waste-lands are the Magpie's favourite haunts. The birds show considerable affection for certain localities, and even the influence of security and food are not sufficient to induce them to take up their residence elsewhere; but when once they have settled upon a locality, even the despoiling of the nest will not deter Magpies from remaining in their favourite abode. Indeed, we have noticed instances where the Magpies were shot, but another pair took possession of the district.

Wherever this may be, the Magpies may be seen not only in summer, but also during winter. In spite of its long tail and rakish appearance, the Magpie has a dull, heavy flight, and when upon the wing is very

different to the smart, active, and inquisitive bird it appears when in confinement.

The female Magpie, as is the case with most of the Corvidæ family, is generally a trifle larger than the male, though possibly this rule is subject to variation; its plumage is not so brilliant, though the difference between the sexes is difficult for amateurs to determine.

Having, in common with the Raven and others of this family, a broad tongue, the Magpie will learn to imitate the human voice, and is consequently often reared from the nest and made a household pet; but if secured within a cage its restlessness invariably occasions a broken tail, whilst the partial freedom of a clipped wing is a source of insecurity to all. Anything glittering is an especial trophy to a Magpie's eye, and is forthwith taken away and hidden, whilst the dog in the kennel has to keep as sharp a look-out upon his dish of bones as the cook in the kitchen upon her more sumptuous dainties.



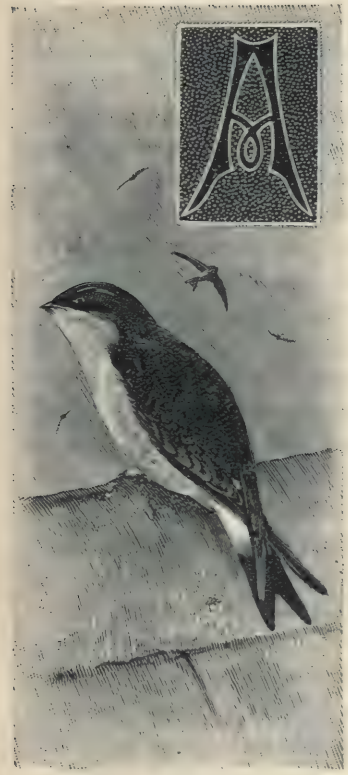
Thu Martin.

MARTIN.

(⅔ Scale.)

THE MARTIN.

Hirundo urbica.



A MEMBER of the great Swallow family, the Martin, or, as it is more generally called, the House Martin, in many respects resembles this bird very closely. It is migratory in its habits, and reaches this country some two or three days after the arrival of the Swallow. Although both birds leave the African continent simultaneously, the superior wing-power of the last-mentioned enables it to perform the journey with greater rapidity. The House Martin reposes unlimited confidence in man, and usually builds its nest under the eaves of houses, or in the angles of windows, and commonly in the centre of towns. They generally choose only one particular house, and

if that one is repainted whilst they are away they will not desert it. Always the birds which live to come back to this country go straight to their last year's nesting-place to breed. Many Martins remain in the country every year and perish from cold and want of food. Not only young ones die, but many old ones do not seem to think of the winter or that there will be no insects for them to feed on.

The nest is a remarkable structure, being made of soft clay, or mud, laid on in layers day by day, and each layer allowed to dry before the next one is added. When getting the clay for the nest they generally alight on the dry ground about a yard or two from the place where they intend to get it, and always get it where it is already wet. They pick it up with their beaks and fly straight to their nest, which takes some time to build ; and in some places they have to go upwards of a mile for suitable materials.

It is somewhat curious to observe the extreme stickiness and tenacity of the earthy mixture used by these birds, and various solutions have been offered on the subject, the generally-received opinion being that the adhesive qualities are augmented by the saliva of the bird itself. White quotes an instance of a Martin building its nest "against the glass of a window," where it stuck firmly with no other support. The nest is hemispheric in shape, with an aperture at the top in front or side ; during the time of its construction the birds may be continually observed in the roadways busily collecting the soft muddy earth from any damp places they can find. The inside of the nest is lined with hay.

The eggs number four or five; they are smooth and

white, and about three-quarters of an inch in length. Incubation occupies about a fortnight; when hatched the young birds are most assiduously fed by their parents, and the quantity of flies and other winged insects captured by the old birds during this period is indeed marvellous. At first the parents enter the nest to feed their offspring, but very shortly the young family learn to expect the return of their guardians with food, and may be seen protruding their little heads through the aperture of the nest in the most unmistakably eager and expectant manner. At such times the Martin clings to the rough surface of the nest, supporting its body with its claws while distributing nourishment to the hungry inmates.

The Martin usually rears two broods in the season, the hen commencing to lay again as soon as the first brood are fledged and able to provide for themselves.

The length of the Martin is five inches and a quarter. The beak is very short and black; irides, brown; the top of the head, ear-coverts, back of the neck, wing-coverts, and back are of a rich glossy bluish-black; rump and upper tail-coverts white. The tail is forked, and the feathers, like those of the wing, are dull black; the wings reach to the end of the forked feathers of the tail. The chin and all the under surface of the body is white; the legs and toes are small and covered with short, fine, downy-white feathers; claws are of a greyish colour, curved and sharp. The sexes resemble each other, but the females and the young birds are not so pure in colour, and the white of the chin and throat are of a dirty greyish-white. Occasionally white varieties are met with.

Like all the members of the *Hirundinæ*, the Martin subsists exclusively upon insects, which it procures whilst

flying. It is most indefatigable in its pursuit of food, and when rain has driven the flies, &c., on which it feeds to the shelter of eaves, or the inequalities of walls, the Martin may be observed fluttering along the outsides of windows, or beneath the sills or eaves, and picking off the sheltering insects with great industry and perseverance.

In addition to being found in Great Britain, these attractive birds are regular visitors to Lapland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Siberia, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands, besides some few other localities.

The Chiff-chaff.

CHIFF CHAFF.

(½ Scale.)

THE CHIFF CHAFF.

Sylvia rufa.
„ hippolais.

THE Chiff Chaff is, with the exception of the wheat-ear, pied wagtail, and meadow pipit, the earliest of our summer visitors, arriving in this country sometimes in March, and remaining until October; indeed, of all our small warblers, it is the first to come and the last to go.

It is a pretty active little bird, smaller than the willow wren, and very closely allied to another species which has apparently been quite overlooked by naturalists. It also bears a certain resemblance to the willow wren, and is no doubt frequently mistaken for it.

The Chiff Chaff derives its name from the

fancied resemblance of its notes to the words "Chiff Chaff," which are uttered with a quick, clear enunciation; the song is sweet and not unmelodious, and when alarmed the bird has a note of displeasure which sounds something like the word "whoo-id" or "whoo-it."

Woods, hedgerows, plantations, gardens, and the reeds and bushes that skirt or overhang streams and ponds are the favourite haunts of the Chiff Chaff, and in such places it may be seen flitting quickly from tree to tree, or rapidly moving along the branches or reeds with a peculiar jerky motion of the body, which cannot very well be mistaken. It may, however, be met with in gardens near the coast in the autumn, but only for a day or two previous to migration.

The food of this bird comprises caterpillars, aphides, moths, flies, and other insects, which are frequently captured during flight. Chiff Chaffs are much addicted to certain localities, and in the spring-time keep pretty much to the same haunts.

The nest is made of various materials, and seems to depend a great deal upon the character of the place in which it is built. It is to be found in low banks, in bushes about a foot from the ground, in the stump of some old mossy tree, or even amongst the long grass found near furzes or bramble. It is built of moss, the skeletons of dead leaves, grasses, hay-stalks, and very often the bark of the birch tree, and may be lined with wool, feathers, and hair. It is skilfully arched, or domed, about half-way over, and left open at the side.

Six or seven eggs are laid in May; they are rounded at the larger and pointed at the smaller end. The colour is a pinky-white ground with dots and spots of a blackish-

purple; the spots are closer together at the thicker end, and frequently take the shape of a belt; the shell is particularly thin, and not much polished in texture. The young birds make their appearance about the middle of June.

The Chiff Chaff is decidedly of a bold and quarrelsome disposition, and readily attacks other birds that may come too near its haunts, the size of its antagonist not being considered of much importance.

This bird is a visitor to most of the European countries. In England it is found throughout Sussex, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Derbyshire, and Worcestershire; it is also met with in Westmoreland, Durham, and Cornwall. In Devonshire it is very common, and it is met with in Scotland (more especially in the Lothians) and in Wales and Ireland. The numbers of Chiff Chaffs that annually visit this country vary considerably; sometimes they come in comparatively large numbers: whilst on other occasions they would appear to be few and far between. Migration is invariably performed at night.

The length of the bird is about four and a-half inches; the bill is dark-brown, the edges at the base being a pale, yellowish-red, beset with bristles. Over the eye there is a pale, yellowish-brown mark, and between the eye and the bill the space is greyish; a narrow circle of the same colour also surrounds the eyes. The iris is dusky; the head, crown, back of neck, and nape are greenish-ash colour or brownish-olive; the chin, throat, and breast, pale, dull, yellowish-white, the yellow being chiefly in indistinct streaks; the back is greenish-ash colour, the edges of the feathers being paler than the remainder. The under-surface of the wings is grey; greater and lesser wing-coverts are a greenish-ash colour, which gets duller

in the summer; the under wing-coverts are a pale yellow.

The tail is rather long, the feathers are blackish-grey, bordered with olive-green, the side feathers have whitish edges, and are a little longer than those in the middle; beneath it is grey, and the under coverts are pale dull-brown, tinged with yellow. Legs and toes are dark blackish-brown, soles light-yellowish, and claws a little lighter.

The female resembles the male so closely as to be almost, if not quite, undistinguishable from it.

The young are greenish-brown above, and a dull yellowish-white on the breast; the green and yellow tints are somewhat brighter than in the adult birds, and the bill, legs, and toes are paler in colour.

The Lapwing.

LAPWING.

(⅓ Scale.)

THE LAPWING.

Vanellus cristatus.
Tringa vanellus.

KNOWN by the name of Peewit in many parts of the country (possibly from its cry), and again as the Green Plover, or, from its crest, as the Crested Lapwing, this bird is known undoubtedly to most people from the fact that its eggs are a favourite delicacy with *gourmets*.

The Lapwing itself is also a very nice-eating bird; and from these two facts it is to be imagined that the Plover has what the Americans would call "a bad time."

They have, however, also established a name that is not rivalled by the Partridge or the Dove, in respect of the devotion that they show to their nest or young. When disturbed upon the nest, the parent bird runs a considerable

distance before it rises, with the intention of leading the intruder from the proximity of its nest. They then fly around, uttering their cry of "peewit," watching if misfortune happen to their nest. From this reason it is somewhat more easy to discover their nesting-place, if people have watched their habits minutely. They will also feign to be wounded, and will flutter along as if with a broken wing.

The young run directly they are hatched, but upon the approach of danger will squat still until the parent bird has lured the intruder away.

The flight of the Lapwing may have given rise to its name, as they fly heavily, though at times at a considerable height, and with a dull, heavy flapping of the wings.

The Lapwing is a common bird, and may be generally found to frequent open places, such as heaths, commons, marshy grounds, and fallow lands, sometimes affecting those that have been drained, frequenting the sides of the drains, in search possibly of food, and also the fields that have been undrained and neglected.

In consequence of the demand for Plovers' eggs, the fields and places that they frequent are hunted over, as it were, by those engaged in the trade, the eggs collected and forwarded to their destination, in spite of the efforts of the birds to lure the intruders from detection of their nests.

The nest is generally but a small structure, made of a few bits of grass, heath, or rushes; and at times no nest is attempted, but the eggs are laid in a slight depression of the ground, either upon a heath or common or in fallow land.

The eggs are usually four in number, of a deep olive-green colour, blotted and spotted in an irregular manner

with dark brownish-black. They are reported to be placed closely in the nest, with the narrow ends pointing inwards.

As before mentioned, the young will run as soon as hatched, and are covered with down, which makes them appear very pretty, but they cannot fly until they are fully grown. The adult birds are really very handsome, as may be imagined from the plate. The feathers upon the head are black, glossed with green, and considerably elongated, so as to form a very pretty upward-turned crest. From the beak to the eye, and passing over it, is a streak of white, sometimes spotted with black or brown; down the throat and upon the breast glossy black; and a streak of the same colour runs from the base of the beak under the eye to the nape of the neck; the back and wings are olive-green, the latter being shaded with brown and purple; the sides and back of the neck are white, shaded with buff; the under parts are white, deepening to pale brown towards the tail. This latter is white, deeply tipped with black.

The female very much resembles the male, but the crest (which is formed of six or seven feathers having an upward tendency) is not so long, and she is not quite so brilliant in her plumage as her mate; the black band, too, across the face—from the base of the beak, and under the eye to the back of the head—is duller, and, indeed, may be termed deep brown. The young very much resemble their parents, but are not so handsome, and also have a shorter crest.

As may be imagined from the districts it frequents, the food of the Lapwing consists principally of worms, slugs, and such other insects as it may find in marshy or fallow lands; but it also eats grain and seeds. They very often feed at night, when the worms quit their holes

—generally upon clear nights, or during "evening's twilight."

When storms occur, or under certain other circumstances, climatic or otherwise, they will assemble in flocks, wheeling around, uttering their wailing cry of "peewit, peewit." They also collect in large flocks in the autumn.

They can hardly be called migratory birds, although they often make considerable changes in the localities they affect. This may be for reasons of food. They, however, spread over the country in the succeeding spring, and perform their duties of incubation as already described.

The Lapwing may be kept easily in a garden or enclosure; and in the former it is really of great service, as it will destroy the worms and slugs, or such-like insects, that infest gardens; and, besides, they are somewhat of an ornament, as they are handsome birds. Of course, it is needless to say that they must have their wings clipped.

The Dispo.

DIPPER.

(½ Scale.)

THE DIPPER.

Cinclus aquaticus.

MOST lovers of nature who have quietly followed for any distance the course of one of our mountain streams must have heard the lively "chit, chit" of the Dipper, and seen them hopping from stone to stone, often in the centre of the stream, showing their white breasts and jerking their short spread tails, to fly off when disturbed, straight and rapidly, close to the water's edge. For this shy and retiring bird is pretty generally found in our country, in those districts in which rapid streams and rivers form a part of the geographical characteristics. In warm weather the bird prefers the higher portions of watercourses, but when the cold is very severe, it follows the courses of rivers and brooks

into the plains and valleys below. It is very commonly found in Devonshire, in the streams that rise in Dartmoor, where the picturesque combination of water and boulder is exactly suited to its tastes and habits. It is also called the Dipper, from its continually dipping into the water in search of food, which consists almost exclusively of aquatic insects, especially beetles and their larvæ.

One very remarkable accomplishment is possessed by this bird, viz., the power of walking along the bed of the streams and rivers it frequents. To accomplish this end, the toes of the bird are long and flexible, and admirably adapted for clinging to the stones and inequalities of the bottom. It is purely a river bird, and is altogether more at home in the water than when compelled to move about upon the ground; indeed, the young ones are generally accomplished divers before they are fully fledged.

The nest of the Dipper is placed either in some cleft of a rock or under the projecting portion of a large stone, and always close to the stream. It is a well-made structure of moss and grass; wide, deep, and domed, with the aperture in front, and built of moss and dried grass, with a good lining of leaves; the nests of these birds, which are generally cleverly concealed, depend, as regards shape and size, a good deal upon the character of the place in which they are located. This is strictly imitated, so that even when the parent bird has been seen to leave the nest, it is very difficult to distinguish it, as it is built with the same kind of materials as surround it on all sides.

The eggs are oval in shape, white in colour, and generally number from four to six; they are laid in April.

The Dipper is partial to certain localities, and frequents the same spots year after year with considerable constancy. The flight is strong, straight, and quick, the movement of the wings being of a very regular character. Its song is a sweet quick note, retained throughout the whole of the year, and is uttered both during flight and also when the bird is perched on some stone or stump.

The Dipper is of a very quarrelsome disposition, and it is rare, except in the breeding season, to see more than one at the same place. Each bird appears to have its own feeding-ground, and should another come upon it, the occupier will keep chasing the intruder until he is obliged to leave.

The genus *Cinclus* to which the Dipper belongs is a sub-family of the Thrushes. It is found in Russia, Siberia, Scandinavia, and generally among the Alpine streams, in Germany and the north of Spain.

The length of the male Dipper is seven inches and three-quarters. The bill is bluish-black, tinged at the edges with brown; iris pale brown, with a ring of black in the centre, the margins of the eyelids white; head, crown, back of neck, dark brown; chin, throat, and upper part of breast, pure white; lower part chesnut, assuming a deep grey towards the tail; the sides deep grey: the back very dark grey, each feather being broadly edged with black. The wings are brownish-black, tinged with grey. The tail is short, even, and of a brownish-black on the upper part, and deep grey slightly tipped with pale brown underneath. The legs and toes are bluish-grey, shaded with brown, claws, dusky. The female resembles the male in plumage, but the head, crown, neck, and nape are a lighter brown, and the chestnut of the breast is of a duller rust colour.

The plumage of the young birds does not fully resemble that of the adult until after the second moult, the prominent differences being that in the young the head, crown, back of the neck, and nape are dull greyish-brown; the chin is white, throat and upper part of breast, pale buff, tipped with blackish-brown, below and on the sides grey, mixed with cream-colour, with darker lines; back dull greyish-brown, margined with brownish-black. The tail is brownish-black, tipped with brownish-white; under-tail-coverts dull grey, mixed with cream-colour. The legs and toes are bluish-grey, tinged with brown, paler in front, the claws brown, margined with white.

The Aurora.

HERON.

(1/8 Scale.)

THE HERON.

Ardea cinerea.

THIS handsome and striking bird may be regarded as an apt example of the vicissitudes connected with popularity. Time was when in merry England the Heron was royal game, a prized and well cared-for bird; the sport it afforded in falconry was esteemed by knights and ladies; it was honoured equally at the table with the swan and the peacock, and protected by stringent laws and heavy penalties. Times and customs are, however, perpetually changing, and the Heron now, although not actually rare, is at any rate quite out of public favour and interest, and may be regarded as solitary, retired, and uncared-for.

The bird belongs to a very numerous tribe, which is almost universally spread

over the globe. It bears a strong affinity to the crane and the stork, but differs from them in one or two particulars: it is smaller, the beak is longer, and the middle claw of each foot is serrated, for the better seizing and securing of the slippery prey upon which it principally feeds; and it is also noticeable for the handsome crest and plumes which adorn its head and neck. The Heron commits great devastation in ponds and shallow waters, where, as well as in marshy places and the banks of lakes and rivers, it spends most of its time. Fish and their fry, frogs, toads, snakes, field-mice, shrews, snails, slugs, worms, and all sorts of insects, are the usual articles of its diet; but it has been occasionally known to transfix a water-rat with its powerful beak, and bear it away in triumph. One distinguishing characteristic of the Heron is the expansive properties of the gullet, which enables the bird to carry home to its young a much larger supply of food than it could manage in the beak alone.

This interesting bird secures its prey by wading into the water, and watching patiently and motionless for some hapless fish. Still as a statue, with its long, graceful neck sunk between its shoulders, and its keen eye fixed upon the water, it rests until the proper moment arrives, when it darts down like lightning on the unsuspecting wanderer; and rarely indeed is the blow unsuccessful. It is said that a single Heron has been known to destroy upwards of fifty small roach and dace in one day, so that its capabilities as a fisher may be considered thoroughly established.

The Heron is remarkably light in proportion to its size, as it very rarely exceeds three-and-a-half pounds in weight, although its length is over three feet, and its

breadth, with wings extended, about five feet. The bill is strong, straight, and pointed, about six inches long; the upper mandible is of a yellowish horn colour, the under one yellow; irides yellow; head and cheeks greyish-white; the elongated feathers forming the plume dark slate-blue; upper surface of the body and wings French grey; wing-primaries black, and tail slate-grey; the neck is white, and varied with dark bluish-grey, forming long spots; the under part of the body is greyish-white, marked with black; and the legs and toes are greenish-yellow; claws brown. The females closely resemble the males in plumage, but the plume is shorter, and the markings are not so distinct or bright. The young birds have no plumal feathers until their third year, and the plumage generally is tinged with ash colour and brown. The eye of the Heron is very bright, and has a bold, piercing expression.

In the breeding season, which usually commences in March, these birds congregate together in large numbers, and, like rooks, build in colonies. The tops of tall trees, such as the oak and fir, are most commonly selected; but occasionally they make use of precipitous rocks near the coast. The nest, which is of very large proportions, is built of sticks, and lined with dried grass and wool. Four or five eggs is the average number. They are of a sea-green colour, and a little more than a couple of inches in length.

Both the parents are very attentive to the requirements of their progeny. The latter make a peculiar noise, something between a croak and a hiss, when they are being fed, and are very noisy and clamorous towards the approach of evening. They quit their nests for an hour or two in the daytime about the end of May or beginning of June, and

may be seen perched on the branches contiguous to their domiciles. They seem far less able to take care of themselves than the majority of birds of the same age, and are fed by their parents until the end of August.

Like most birds of prey, the Heron suffers alternately from a scarcity and a superfluity of food, sometimes being gorged to repletion, but more commonly hungry in appearance and lean in condition.

In flight the long legs are stretched straight out behind, and the neck curled back between the shoulders. The character of the flight is heavy and flagging. Sometimes, however, the bird soars to a considerable height, and whilst on the wing utters a harsh, discordant cry.

One of the largest and most interesting heronries in England is at Parham, in Sussex. Yarrell gives a list of about thirty existing heronries in England; but it is much to be feared that they, in common with many other curiosities of natural history, are rapidly decreasing in number and importance.

The Woodcock.

WOODCOCK.

(½ Scale.)

THE WOODCOCK.

Scolopax rusticola.

THIS comparatively common bird is a species of the Grallatores or Wading birds, and belongs to the sub-family of the Scolopacinæ or Snipes. Owing to its shy and retiring habits, and the fact that it seeks its food by night, the Woodcock is by no means so familiarly known as the great majority of the feathered tribes; and in all probability there are but few persons, with the exception of sportsmen, who have seen a Woodcock, save when exposed for sale at the poulterer's, or preserved in the cases of a museum.

It is one of our winter migratory birds, usually arriving on our coasts in October and leaving again in March, although the young are constantly found in different parts of England, and

in many districts of Scotland during the summer months, the Weald of Sussex being one locality worthy of especial notice as furnishing instances every year of their breeding in this country.

This bird is to be found in Norway, Lapland, Sweden, Finland, Russia, and Italy, and less commonly in Germany, Switzerland, and France. In certain parts of Asia and Africa it is also met with, and according to Morris, in the Madeira Isles it is "a perennial resident."

In its migratory flight the Woodcock generally first visits the east of Scotland and north of England, and the bird is supposed to complete its passage from the shores of the Baltic to our own coasts between sunset and sunrise, and during a north-east wind. The flight during migration has been spoken of as being at a considerable altitude. The numbers in which it arrives vary very considerably. As with many other birds, the sexes separate during, or shortly previous to, migration, the females preceding the males in the selection of their winter quarters. When the weather is mild, the Woodcock often resorts to the open moors or bleak hill-sides; but immediately the temperature becomes lower, and frost and snow make their appearance, it seeks warmer situations, and betakes itself to woods, copses, and plantations. In choosing these retreats, it evinces a strong partiality for springs, running brooks, low marshy hollows, and spots where furze and thick undergrowths are plentiful.

The principal food of the Woodcock consists of the earthworms that usually abound in moist grounds; and the places where the birds have been engaged during the night in searching for food may easily be detected by the numberless perforations left in the soft earth by their long bills.

Few birds are more eagerly sought for by the sportsman than the Woodcock, and probably still fewer boast of a higher reputation as a table delicacy. As already stated, these birds feed at night, and almost invariably follow the same route from their cover to their feeding places. Indeed, such is their regularity in this respect, that they used formerly to be commonly taken in nets suspended across these runs, or "cock-roads," and also in horsehair nooses set in similar localities.

The nest is usually found in dry, warm situations in woods, amongst dead grass and leaves, no care or effort towards concealment being apparent. It is composed of dead leaves, especially fern, loosely put together, and without lining. Three or four eggs are laid, of a yellowish-white colour, about one-and-a-half inches in length, the longer end being marked with ash-grey and reddish-yellow brown. The mother exhibits great attachment for her brood.

The average length of the Woodcock is about fourteen-and-a-half inches; the beak is three inches long, pale reddish-brown at the base, and dark brown at the point; the eyes are large and convex, and have a somewhat strange and staring expression; irides dark brown. The plumage is handsome, and is composed of three shades of brown, and as every feather on the upper surface of the body contains the three shades, the back presents a beautifully variegated appearance; the cheeks are pale wood-brown with darker spots, and there is a prominent streak of dark brown from the beak to the eye; the wings are reddish-brown, with open oval rings of dark brown, and the under-feathers of the tail black, tipped with white; all the other under-parts are wood-brown, with darker coloured bars; the legs and toes are brown, and the claws black.

The female is larger than the male, and the plumage in the upper part of the body is more black, and the lower parts more red; but in both sexes the markings grow fainter as the birds increase in age.

Woodcocks are voracious feeders, and are frequently found to be covered with fat when shot. They differ considerably in weight, young birds sometimes not weighing more than seven ounces, whilst adult birds commonly attain to fourteen and fifteen ounces.

The flight is rapid at all times.

The Water Wagtail.

WATER WAGTAIL.

(½ Scale.)

THE WATER WAGTAIL.

Motacilla Yarrellii.
" Alba.

THE Water Wagtail, or, as it is commonly called, the "Dish-washer," is the commonest, and therefore the best known, of the British Wagtails. It is a smart, active little bird, frequenting the sides of nearly every pool, pond, or brook in the country. In such localities it may be met with at all times of the day, either nimbly running over the stones, mud, and aquatic vegetation, or taking short upward flights in pursuit of insects.

The Wagtail derives its name from the constant habit of elevating its tail with a quick jerky motion, as though desirous of keeping the plumage clean and dry. It runs very quickly, and flies with an alternate rising and falling in the air. This peculiar flight is one of its most observable characteristics, and the bird may readily be distinguished by it from almost all others.

Although so closely associated with water, the Wagtail is unable to swim, but the ease and confidence with which it moves over the floating leaves of water-plants render this accomplishment quite superfluous. Despite its partiality for the water-side, this little bird may frequently be seen on lawns, in meadows, farm-yards, roadways, and fields where ploughing is being carried on; indeed, this last is a very favourite resort, and the Wagtail may be commonly noticed following closely on the heels of the ploughman, and searching for food amongst the newly-turned furrows with great activity and perseverance.

In the selection of localities for building their nests, these birds are somewhat erratic, and do not appear to have any particular partiality; sometimes they build in the stonework of some old bridge or in the hollow of a tree, whilst the sides of railway cuttings, the banks of streams, low mud or stone walls, and faggot stacks are very frequently made use of. The nest is built of stems of grass, leaves, small roots, and moss, and is lined with wool, hair, feathers, or any convenient soft substance.

The eggs are five or six in number, of a long oval form, light grey or greyish-blue in colour, and spotted all over with grey and brown; they vary very much in size and colour, and some are spotted thickly at the larger end, the spots being in the shape of a belt.

There are frequently two broods in the year; the time of hatching is about a fortnight, and both parents are assiduously attentive to the young birds. The female is especially solicitous for the well-being of her offspring, rarely leaving them except for a very short time, and never going very far away from her charge.

The food of the Wagtail consists principally of insects,

which, as already stated, it pursues in the air as well as on the ground or water.

The note, which is frequently repeated, especially when the bird is alarmed, is a sharp "cheep," but it occasionally varies this note with a pleasant little modulation, which is almost protracted enough to be considered a song.

The length of the Wagtail is about seven-and-a-half inches, and the plumage is of a striking character; the bill is deep black; iris dusky black, with a narrow white space over it; forehead and side of head white; back of head deep black; neck in front white, with a semicircular band of black running up towards the bill; nape deep black; back black, and greyish towards the middle; wings greyish-black, margined with white; tail very long and rounded at the end, the middle feathers being black and the outer ones white, banded with black; legs slender, toes and claws deep black. The female has a general resemblance to the male, but the markings are not so distinctly defined; the crescent on the fore-part of the neck is smaller, and in the summer it is tinged with grey. The breast is greyish-white; there is more grey in the back, and the two middle feathers of the tail are brownish-black.

After moulting, the plumage of both sexes undergoes an alteration, and the birds appear of a more greyish colour. The black feathers gradually disappear from the throat of both sexes, and the dorsal plumage becomes much lighter. In the young birds the bill is of a dusky tinge, with the edges yellowish. Over the forehead there is a thin light grey or yellowish streak. There is a dusky line on each side of the throat which forms a curve in front; the breast is marked with grey and yellowish-brown, and the crescent-shaped mark is not very clearly seen. After

the autumnal moult, however, the plumage is considerably more distinct, and the various markings become more perceptible.

The Wagtail is a native of Great Britain, and is also largely found in Norway and Sweden. It is partly migratory, and journeys southward in the autumn, returning from the Continent early in the spring, at which time of year it may be found in the most northernly parts of Scotland.

The Ridge Sparrow.

HEDGE-SPARROW.

($\frac{3}{4}$ Scale.)

THE HEDGE-SPARROW.

Accentor modularis.

THIS little bird is also known by the names of Dunnock, Shufflewing, Hedge-accentor, and Hedge-warbler. It is of quiet, unobtrusive habits, and its plumage is equally unpretending and commonplace. It is one of the most common of our feathered residents, and is found in all parts of Great Britain, and at all times and seasons. The Hedge-sparrow is not gregarious, being seldom seen more than two or three together, and then generally hopping quickly from perch to perch after each other. It exhibits strong partiality for localities; indeed it seldom ventures to any great distance from the hedgerows, gardens or orchards in which it rears its young. The ex-

ception to this "stay-at-home" tendency is when a young cuckoo has taken surreptitious possession of its affections, and then its love for its own offspring seems to be entirely lost, and other habits equally changed.

In cold weather the Hedge-sparrow will patronise the neighbourhood of dwelling-houses and farm-yards, and may be seen on roads, gutters, and sinks diligently searching for food. The food consists for the most part of insects and their larva, grubs, worms, chrysalides, seeds, and various grains.

The song of this little bird is very sweet, and is generally delivered when the bird is sitting on the top-most branch of a hedge or small bush. It is very tame or bold, and will seldom cease until it has finished, no matter how close you may go to it in reason; and its pretty little "cheep, cheep" may be heard alike in the spring, in the summer sunshine, and when the winter's snow has considerably diminished the vocal efforts of more pretentious songsters. Although generally of a mild and peaceable disposition, instances have occasionally presented themselves in which very severe combats have taken place between these birds.

A hawthorn hedge is the favourite nesting-place of the Hedge-sparrow, though it does build in other places, such as furze bushes and low shrubs, or holes in walls, wood-stacks and ivy. The nest is made of straw, dead twigs, and dried grass, and is lined with moss, hair, grass, and wool. The birds commence building early in the spring, frequently, indeed, before the leaves of the hedgerows have begun to show themselves. Early in April four or five eggs are laid of a very pretty greenish-blue colour, with a noticeably smooth and glossy-looking surface. About

eleven days are occupied in incubation. Two or three broods are commonly reared in the year, and the young ones (always providing that no cuckoo interferes) are almost exclusively fed upon an insect diet. When searching for food, the Hedge-sparrow has a peculiar way of raising and moving the wings, and the name of "Shuffle-wing" has obviously been acquired from this habit. It has also a quick flirty movement of the tail. The flight is low, straight, and tolerably quick, but it seldom indulges in any very extended journeys; at times, however, birds may be seen, two or three following each other at a considerable height, flying round and round, and then dropping suddenly in some thicket. It is very fond of dusting itself in the roadways, and is partial to a bath.

This familiar little bird inhabits all the more temperate parts of Europe, and is found as far north as Norway and Sweden, although it does not spend its winter in these countries, but leaves for the warmer climates of France and Italy.

The length of the Hedge-sparrow is about five inches and a-half, or a little more. The bill is dark brown, lighter at the base, the corners of the mouth being of a dull yellow. Iris, dark blackish-brown, with a reddish tint; head and crown, dark bluish-grey, streaked with brown; nape, grey, streaked with brown; sides of the neck dark bluish-grey, streaked with brown; chin, throat, upper part of breast, dark bluish-grey; lower part of breast, lighter; sides, pale yellowish-brown; back, brown; centres of the feathers, reddish, and the outsides, yellowish-brown; greater and lesser wing-coverts are yellowish-brown; middle ones tipped with white; under wing-coverts, brown bordered with white. The tail is slightly forked,

rather curved downwards, and has the side feathers a little bent outwards. The legs and toes are of a dark orangy-brown; the claws are black, and the hind one is considerably the largest.

The female is a trifle smaller than the male, but resembles the male in her plumage, except that it is duller, the spots are larger, and the lower part of the back is more olive-coloured; but the sexes are very difficult to distinguish.

Varieties of the Hedge-sparrow are occasionally met with pure white, and some in which the markings exhibit considerable variations.

As already hinted, this bird is very frequently selected by the Cuckoo as a foster-parent for its young.

The Pheasant.

PHEASANT♂

(⅛ Scale.)

THE PHEASANT.

Phasianus colchicus.

PERHAPS, with the solitary exception of the peacock, the male Pheasant may safely be described as the handsomest of our British birds, the richness of its colours and the extreme brilliancy of its plumage having always attracted attention and occasioned well-deserved admiration. It belongs to the Rasorial, or Gallinaceous birds, and is so popular both for purposes of sport and as an article of food, that it is very strictly preserved, and bred and reared with considerable care and attention. Indeed, it might almost be considered as belonging to our domestic birds, were it not for its natural timidity, which seems to prevent that entire confidence and absence of fear so common to other birds of the Gallinaceous order.

The Pheasant has a history of very long standing. Its introduction into this country took place certainly before

the end of the thirteenth century, as we read that in the time of Edward I. a pheasant was valued in the then currency of the country at fourpence; after making due allowances for the alteration in the value of money, it is clear that the bird has steadfastly kept its position in the scale of public appreciation.

The Pheasant is found in all parts of England, but although large numbers are artificially bred and fed with fowls at the gamekeeper's door, they never quite lose their wild habits, and immediately retreat to their covers at the approach of a dog or any strange and objectionable objects.

Wood and water are indispensable to the welfare of Pheasants; they seek the shelter of woods with thick brushwood closely grown, and love to feed on the greensward of adjoining meadows, but generally close enough to secure a hasty and uninterrupted retreat in case of alarm or disturbance. At other times they exhibit a strong partiality for some island in a lake or large pond, that may be overgrown with rushes, reeds, or osiers. Hedgerows and the borders of plantations are also favourite haunts, but they very seldom venture into open and unprotected localities.

The food of the Pheasant consists of cereal grain, seeds, green leaves, insects, especially ants, beech-mast, acorns, blackberries, sloes, hips and haws, and the roots of the golden buttercup. These birds are exceedingly troublesome in the neighbourhood of gardens, and when they can effect an entrance, feed freely on vegetables, seeds, and roots.

The young are principally fed upon ants' eggs and insects, until they are fully capable of providing for

themselves. The males and females are not associated during a great part of the year, but in the spring the male bird chooses his mates, generally about six or eight in number. During a part of the breeding season the males roost near to the females, and exhibit considerable watchfulness and spirit in defence of their consorts, but when the eggs are laid, the males seem to become quite indifferent, and leave the entire charge of the broods to the females.

The nest is made on the ground, and is composed of leaves or dried stalks; it is sometimes placed in the long grass or clover of a field, and occasionally in woods and plantations. The eggs vary in number from six to ten, and frequently more; indeed, so many eggs have been found in a nest, that the supposition is commonly held that sometimes more than one Pheasant lays in the same nest. Pheasants have been also known to lay their eggs in the nest of the partridge.

The colour of the eggs is an uniform olive-brown, minutely dotted all over; in some instances, however, they are greyish-white, tinged with green.

The hen Pheasant attends very closely to the requirements of her brood, and bestows on them her constant care and protection until the moulting season.

The young Pheasant is very subject to a disease called the gapes, and this affection is at times exceedingly destructive, especially to birds in confinement.

In its flight the Pheasant is laboured and heavy; it expands the tail, flaps the wings rapidly, and scuds or sails along for some distance before alighting on the ground. When disturbed in thick woods, the bird rises for some few yards with considerable violence and velocity, and then slowly flies away, as already mentioned. The general

movements of the bird are nimble; it runs quickly, and carries the wings slightly drooped and the tail somewhat elevated.

The crow of the male bird is a short loud cackle, and the note of the female a shrill piping whistle. The male crows at all parts of the day, and when alarmed by any sudden or unexpected noise, its cry is incessant, and so loud that its locality is invariably betrayed.

Like many other of the Gallinaceous birds, the Pheasant frequently breeds with birds of a different species. Hybrids with the common fowl are very common in the neighbourhood of preserves, especially where the smaller and lighter breeds of fowls are kept. These hybrids are sometimes larger than either parent, and generally very wild. Crosses with the beautiful Chinese varieties of pheasant are fertile, and traces of these foreign strains are now occasionally to be found in preserves.

The end of Vol. 3.

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40. Illustrations